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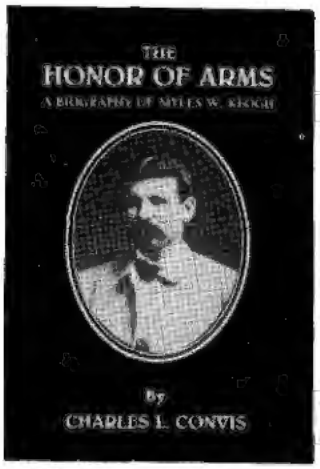

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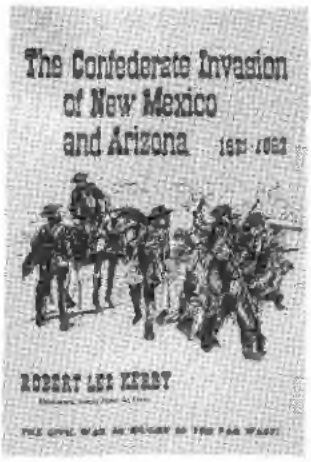

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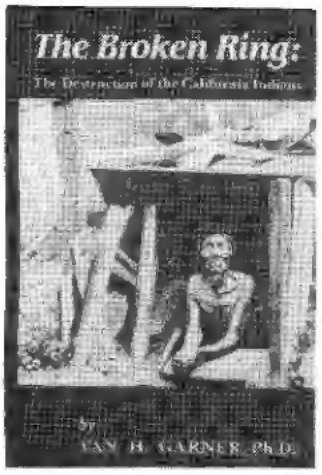

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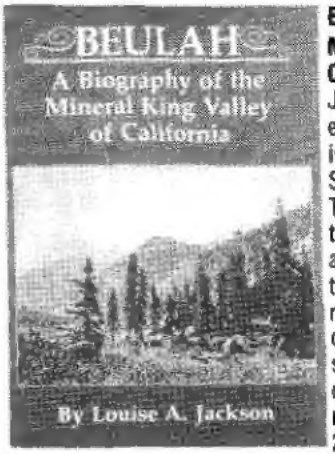

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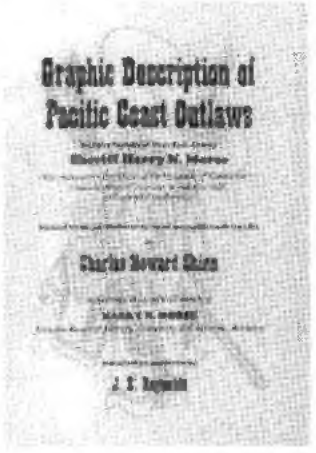

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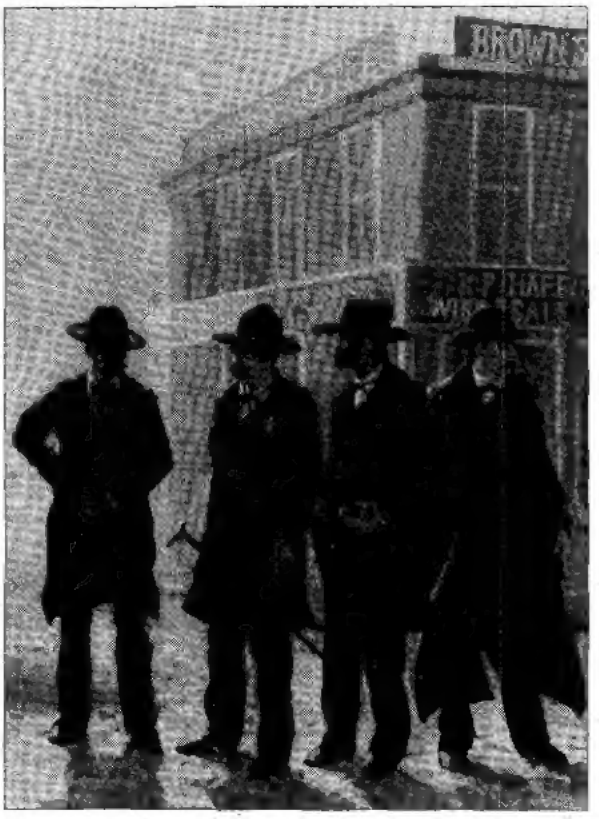

A LONG TIME AGO, IN AN ARIZONA MINING CAMP CALLED TOMBSTONE....

LEFT: *THE EARP BROTHERS and DOC HOLLIDAY, in front of Hafford's Saloon on the corner of Fourth and Allen Streets, just before stepping off on their 'walk with destiny' down Fourth Street to turn left, (west), on Fremont to confront the Clanton-McLaury Cowboys in the vacant lot just beyond Fly's Rooming House. Wyatt Earp, (extreme left), starts to tuck his long-barreled pistol behind his back, right side, under his overcoat. Tombstone City Marshal and older brother of Wyatt, Virgil, holds the cane disported earlier by Doc Holliday, (extreme right in picture). Virgil will soon switch the walking stick to his left hand, carrying it thusly until the Earp party passes Bauer's Union Market on Fremont Street when the Marshal will move the cane back to his right to eventually wave it aloft thereby dramatizing his demand for the Cowboys to surrender their guns. Younger brother and Earp bothead, Morgan, stands to Virgil's left, riveting his stare down Allen Street, where some of the Cowboys have already crossed into the O.K. Corral. Meanwhile, controversial Earp loyalist, Doc Holliday, cradles a double-barreled shotgun under the left side of his distinctive long gray coat. The muzzle of the insidious weapon is barely seen here. Doc keeps his eye on the Grand Hotel, across the street, a well-known Cowboy hangout. The fiery Earp duo, Doc and Morg, are about to transfer their six-shooters from waist-high scabbards to their outer rightside coat pockets for speedier access, if necessary. It soon will be....*

BELOW: *The tempestuous Doc Holliday brings the shotgun into play in the heat of the murderous gunfire between the Earp party and the Cowboys on Fremont Street. Doc 'lets go', at point-blank range, against Tom McLaury, seen taking the buckshot salvo in his right ribs.*

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TRUE WEST

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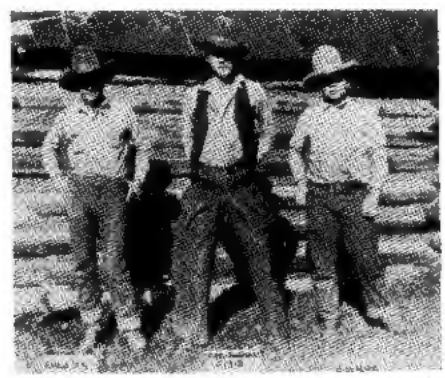

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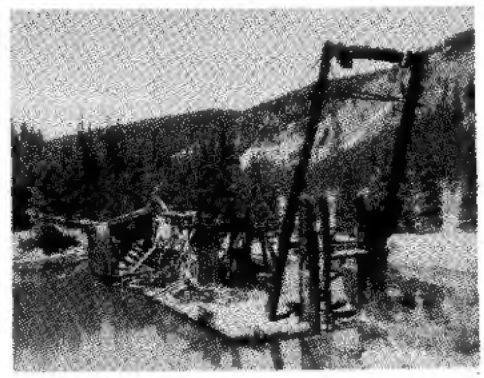

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From the Editor

Howdy, folks!

By now you should orter have read all the great articles and scintillating columns in this pore rag. For you know I don't approve of anyone wasting his or her short time on this earth with my editorial ramblings—leastwise not until *after* reading the rest of the book. In fact, I generally try to discourage anyone from reading this column at all, lest it make 'em addle-pated. But if you insist on seeing these twenty column inches through to the bitter end, I aim to tell you about the big doin's we have planned for next month.

The October TRUE WEST is going to be required reading for anyone with an interest in old-time outlaws—more specifically the most famous of the old-time outlaws, Frank and Jesse James, with a dose of Billy the Kid thrown in to boot.

Now, I admit that Jesse and I haven't always been on the best of terms. In fact, I once publicly allowed as how I was sick and tired of Jesse James and how I could die happy if I never published another story about him or the Youngers or any of the rest of his gang.

I was nearly lynched by a few of Jesse's many admirers before I could explain that it warn't Jesse his ownself that had me feelin' so low, but the fact that it's so durned difficult to get credible new material on him or his exploits. His life has been so thoroughly picked over that most of what can actually be documented about him has been told and told and told again. The supposed "new discoveries" are usually unreliable, and I've had my own fingers burned oncet or twicet publishing questionable material on Jesse.

But the amount of mail we get about the James gang and the amount of attention he continues to get from the other media are sure signs that a lot of folks are still fascinated by America's most famous outlaw. So when I suddenly found the files here at the office bulging with not one but four good, original, James gang manuscripts by four reliable researchers, I just had to go for broke and put 'em all together in a special issue.

For starters, you'll be able to read Ted Yeatman's "Alan Pinkerton and the Raid on Castle James." Likely you remember not too long ago Ted's discovery of Pinkerton's correspondence regarding Jesse caused a ruckus in newspapers across the country. Since then, Ted has continued to unearth startling new facts. His article next month will resolve some of the controversies surrounding the bombing of the Samuel-James home and stir up some new ones—one of which is that a very high-level United States Army officer was involved.

When Ted and I were discussing his article, he mentioned to me that my friend Fred Egloff was working on a manuscript on the bomb itself—where it came from, how it was made, how it worked, and what it was intended to do. I immediately got in touch with Fred, who kindly agreed that his article and Ted's would make good companion pieces. As a result, next month's issue will contain two important new articles on that notorious incident.

At the same time I was working with Ted and Fred, E. Lisle Reedstrom, a regular TRUE WEST contributor, had tracked down the untold story of the Wild West show that Frank James and Cole Younger ran together after Cole was released from prison. That obscure episode in Cole's and Frank's lives offers a fascinating glimpse into the making of the mythological West, and it is sprinkled with humorous anecdotes. Ironically, the two old outlaws were plagued by grifters and riff-raff who followed the show from town to town, preying on unsuspecting locals.

I had those articles and Lisle's cover photo lined up for the October issue when at the last minute a manuscript came in that is sure to raise some eyebrows. It's a clear-eyed look at a meeting between Jesse James and Billy the Kid—the real ones, not J. Frank Dalton and Brushy Bill Roberts—rumored to have taken place at Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1879. Author Richard Patterson, another TRUE WEST regular, examines the tantalizing bits of evidence anew to arrive at some surprising, objective conclusions.

In case you're among those unfortunate souls who don't give two hoots about the James gang, we'll also have our usual variety of articles and columns. So pass this issue on to a friend and tell him or her to get ready for more great western reading next month.

John Joerschke

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Truly Western

Mounted Rangers

Well, I'm sure glad I always read TRUE WEST from cover to cover. I was very pleased to find the letter from Bill Yarck of the Arizona Rangers in "Truly Western" (TRUE WEST, June 1992). I was excited to learn of their mission and charter because I'm a member of the Colorado Mounted Rangers, and our mission is about identical to theirs.

Originally organized in 1861 by Territorial Governor William Gilpin as the Colorado Rangers, our mission was to be the governor's personal police force. Members were called up as needed. They originally guarded the gold shipments form the Colorado mines, later served during the mine strikes.

In 1941 we were reorganized as a private organization and renamed the Colorado Mounted Rangers. At that time our primary mission was to oversee stock shows. Today our mission is largely like that of the Arizona Rangers. We assist local law enforcement agencies when requested and provide security, traffic, and crowd control at various public and private functions.

Thanks to TRUE WEST, we hope to establish communication with the Arizona Rangers and exchange information about our mutual interests.—**Sgt. George L. Bourbeau, Troop I, Colorado Mounted Rangers, 2316 West Dale Street, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80904.**

Editor's Note: What kind of a feller was Gilpin that he needed a personal police force?

Ignoring Women

I enjoyed the April issue of TRUE WEST very much. Mr. Hall's remark in "Truly Western" that women contributed very little to the "pioneering of the country" is not entirely true. Anyone who has heard of Sacajawea, Calamity Jane, Cattle Kate, or Cattle Annie, to name just a few, knows that women played a very large part in America's West.—**Dale-Marie J. Seutter, 18311-77 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA T5T 2G5.**

Custer Fairy Tale

I would just like to know where Michael D. Brockway got his fairy tale, "Custer's Winter in Austin" (TRUE WEST, June 1992). My grandfather, Charles Wesley Wellman Dow, of the First Iowa Cavalry, Volunteers, was with Custer for a year until they were mustered out. I have published papers telling how mean, cruel, and dishonest Custer was during that time. They did gamble on the horse races, with Custer forcing his men to participate as riders.—**Mary Jane Greenstreet, 1011**

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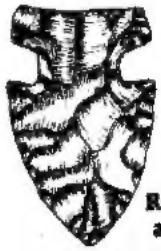
Michael D. Brockway's Response: I'm sorry "Custer's Winter in Austin" upset Ms. Greenstreet, but her comments would be more germane to an article about Custer's conflict with the First Iowa Cavalry. That's a historical debate which will probably never be satisfactorily resolved. On the other hand, the Custers' active social life in Austin and the general's kindness to the children at the school for the deaf are well documented. Custer's overall popularity in Texas is, perhaps, best reflected by the joint resolution of condolence passed by the Fifteenth Texas Legislature in 1876. That was not the act of a citizenry which perceived Custer as "mean, cruel, and dishonest." As for the horse races, I defer to Elizabeth Custer's account in *Tenting on the Plains* that no wagers were made. After all, she was there—I was not.

Women, the West, and Mr. Hall

I'd bet the ranch you were right about getting "some interesting correspondence from women" regarding George A. Hall's letter to the editor (TRUE WEST, April 1992). When I first read his letter I didn't know whether to laugh, cry, or scream.

On the off chance that the door of the closed mind could be opened a crack, I have a few questions for Mr. Hall. First, are you one hundred percent certain that every historical event has been recorded and reported exactly as it happened? If, through discoveries of new historical evidence, it was found that an event had been recorded inaccurately, wouldn't you want the history texts in schools and libraries corrected? And if the frontier was so secure before women came west, who were the women who

Photo Credits: The photo of the Colorado History Museum on pages eight and nine of the July 1992 TRUE WEST appeared courtesy of the Colorado Historical Society. The one of J.G. "Doc" Scurlock on page 12 of the August 1992 TRUE WEST appeared courtesy of Robert Hart, Lincoln County Heritage Trust. We regret the omissions.



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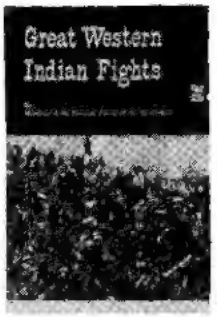

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were attacked and injured, killed, or captured by Indians and outlaws?

Mr. Hall wrote, "Women did very little in the earliest pioneering of our country." I would like to hear him tell that to the women who were on the Mayflower.

Finally, a person's sex has nothing to do with how good a historian he or she is.—**Shannon Jablonski, 11692 Heacock Street, Moreno Valley, California 92557.**

History Full of Holes

I was born in 1917, the year Buffalo Bill died. When I was eight, my pa took me to a fair in Lordsburg, New Mexico, to see some of Cody's guns and things.

The main attraction was a sharpshooter who claimed he was a better shot then Cody ever was. When we got there, he was tossing up steel washers, blazing away at them with his .44. He hit maybe one in twenty, and a man asked him why he was missing so many. He said he wasn't, that he was shooting through the holes.

That got a laugh, but he pulled out a roll of five-dollar bills. "Gents," he said, "I'd like to make a few bets. I bet I can toss up ten washers and shoot through the hole of every last one of 'em."

"How are we gonna know if you shoot through them holes?" a feller asked.

"Easy." The marksman pasted pieces of paper over the holes. Before he started shooting, he had the men put up their money.

Before our very eyes he held up a washer, then tossed it in the air and shot at it. As each washer was picked up from the dirt, it had a hole through the paper. He drilled all ten of them.

Papa lost fifteen dollars. Some lost more. When we got in our Model T to start back to Deming, Papa said it was worth it, that "any man who could shoot that good deserves to win."

I had something to tell Pa, and as he listened I could see he didn't want to hear it. An eight-year-old sees things from a lower level, and I had been watching the sharpshooter's hand. As he tossed up each washer, he poked his finger through the paper.—**Gilbert Williams, PO Box 128, Deming, New Mexico 88031.**

Your letters and comments are welcome. Please keep letters to 300 words or less. All letters received by Western Publications will be considered for publication unless otherwise stipulated in the letter. Space does not permit us to print all letters we receive. Be sure to include full name, address, and zip code. Photos welcome. Address all letters to Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076.

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Small Fort Played Big Role

By JOHN LEGG

The San Juan Mountains rise fifty miles or so to the west; to the east and northeast, the Sangre de Cristos soar to the sky. Southward runs the vast valley that offers clear riding all the way to Taos, New Mexico, eighty-five miles away. Here, in the Colorado side of the San Luis Valley, the United States Army built Fort Garland, but only after a fort nearby proved unsatisfactory.

In June 1852, the army had built Fort Massachusetts six miles north of the Fort Garland site, making it the first fort within the present-day borders of Colorado. However, the fort had been placed too near the mountain slopes to be a good defensive position, and its site was swampy and unhealthy.

For those reasons the army built Fort Garland as a replacement in June 1858 and abandoned Fort Massachusetts. The new adobe fort, between Trinchera and Ute Creeks in the San Luis Valley, in what was then New Mexico Territory, was intended to protect settlers from the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches.

The post had many commanders in its twenty-five-year history, but Kit Carson was the most famous. The former trapper had, by the 1860s, become a scout, explorer, hunter, leading Taos citizen, and a United States Army officer. His volunteer company was stationed at Fort Garland for about a year beginning in 1866.

While Fort Garland was fairly small (it could house only about one hundred soldiers and a few officers) it played an important role in the history of southern Colorado. By 1883, however, the fort had outlived it usefulness and the army abandoned it in November. Troops stationed there were transferred to Fort Lewis in southwestern Colorado.

Unattended, the old adobe fort fell into disrepair. It gained new life in 1945, however, when the Colorado Historical Society restored it.

Fort Garland's six adobe buildings form a rough parallelogram around a small, dusty parade ground above which rises an American flag. The banner is a modern flag, though a thirty-seven-star flag, a replica from Carson's time, flies on special occasions, such as Memorial Day.

Five of the buildings are restored originals; the sixth is a reconstruction. The buildings include officers' quarters, the commander's quarters, infantry barracks, and cavalry barracks. The cavalry building also houses a soldiers' theater, which includes a small stage where troops used to put on plays and shows. That building today also con-

(see FORT, page 10)

Volunteers Needed

Indian Art To Be Studied

Clear Creek Canyon is an Indian lover's paradise with over 12,000 painted and carved Fremont Indian drawings on more than 500 rock panels. Their setting, in 900 acres, is one of Utah's newest state parks—Fremont Indian State Park. Park officials believe much of the art to be part of an ancient calendar system that marked the four seasons. Now they are inviting the public to help them further unravel the mysteries of the artwork on the fall equinox, September 26.

Hundreds of separate sites reveal pictographs (painted characters) and petroglyphs (chipped, chiseled, or etched characters), that the Fremont Indians left on the canyon walls 1,000 years ago. "This is a fascinating park still filled with mystery and plenty of discovery," said park ranger Peter Weimer.

According to scientists, Indians marked the four seasons by their drawings with the aid of certain landmarks from the canyon's landscape. Weimer says he believes the seasonal equinox together with rock art were calendaring devices the Indians used to decide when to plant and when to harvest.

"We're often discovering new Indian art," said Weimer, who is also director of the park's Solstice Project. "The spirit of discovery is hot and we're hoping the public will help us understand the Indian calendars better through experiments conducted on only four days of the year." Those dates are the spring equinox, the summer solstice, the fall equinox, and the winter solstice, this year on December 19.

Weimer said interest in the Fremont Indian sun calendar intensified after a discovery several years ago in New Mexico's Chaco Canyon. There, three slabs of rock, each weighing about two tons, were found positioned perfectly to reveal the shape of a dagger when the sun shone through the sides of the panels. The dagger shape, appearing only at noon four times a year, shines in different positions on a wheel, etched on a flat rock, and is believed to be the way the Anasazi Indians determined the change in seasons.

"At Fremont Indian State Park, three times a day on each of the four days in the year are important to watch how the sun's angle hits specific rock art," Weimer explained. He suggests that sunrise, midday, and sunset are also excellent times to observe the artwork.

"We're very interested in having the public's help with these historic experiments," Weimer added. The abundance of artwork in the canyon necessitates volunteer help, and park rangers will direct observers where to look. "This is a rare opportunity to involve unofficial Indian historians in the discovery of ancient time lines," said Weimer.

Fremont Indian State Park is along Interstate 70, twenty-five miles southwest of Richfield, Utah, and fifteen miles east of the Interstate 15 Cove Fort Junction. The park has no admission fees and also includes a museum and visitors' center. For more information about the park or the rock art observations, contact (800) 322-3770.

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Equestrian Art Exhibited

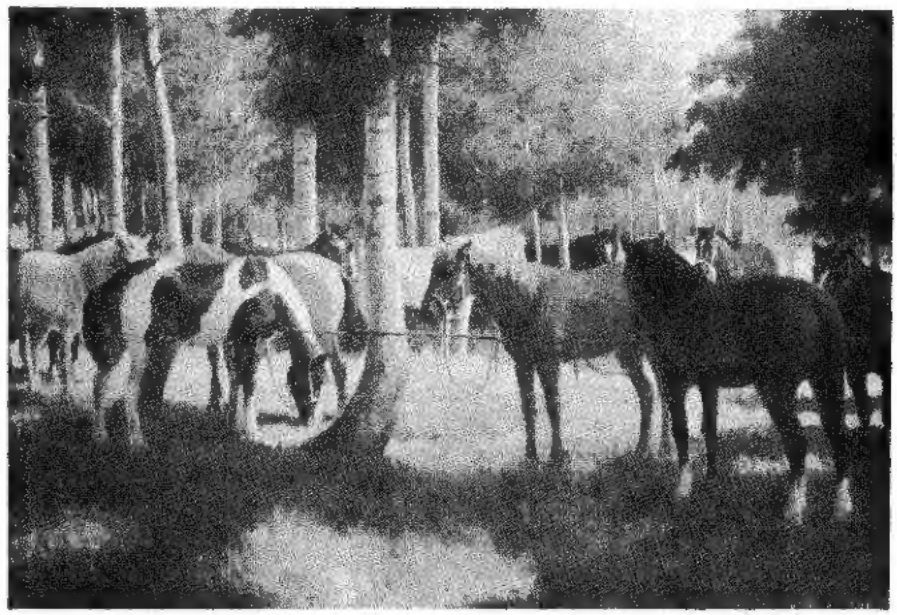
"Horseman With a Paintbrush: The Art of Edward Quigley," an exhibit of art and memorabilia documenting Edward Quigley's fascination with range horses, will be on display at The High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, September 27 through February 14. The exhibit will present a comprehensive collection of Quigley's oil paintings, carvings, and bronzes. Personal artifacts of Quigley's life as an artist on horseback will also be on display.

Edward Burns Quigley was born December 20, 1895, in Park River, North Dakota, a town with a horse economy. Even in Spokane, Washington, where his family moved when he was five years old, six-horse Concord coaches and big freight outfits passed by his home every day. The Quigley family and neighbors still relied on saddle horses, buggies, and buckboards for transportation. Magnificent draft horses were a common sight pulling brewery wagons and parading circuses through town.

Quigley developed a keen interest in horses, an interest matched only by his enthusiasm for drawing. Early lessons from his grandfather and encouragement from teachers resulted in Quigley's work appearing regularly in his high school magazine and in commercial advertisements. After serving in World War I, Quigley spent the next ten years in the Midwest working as a commercial artist and attending art school.

In 1930, Quigley headed back to the Pacific Northwest. Living in a cabin at the base of Mount Hood and maintaining a small commerical studio in Portland, the artist faced tough times as the Depression deepened. During that period he produced a number of striking murals for both public buildings and private homes and devoted his spare time to serious painting.

While accompanying friends on a hunting trip to the Yakima Valley, Quigley went armed only with his paint box and easel. A chance meeting led to an introduction to the Yakima Indians, who still maintained huge horse herds on their reservation. That turned his work in a new direction. Running wild horses in the Simcoe Hills with Yakima Indian Kiutus Jim and working trail drives and roundups with eastern Oregon rancher Tony Vey enabled Quigley to paint intensely personal visions of High Desert horses against a backdrop of bunchgrass and rimrock.



High Desert Museum

Edward Quigley's fascination with horses is evident in "Picket Line in the Aspens," one of his works exhibited at the High Desert Museum.

The High Desert Museum, six miles south of Bend on US Highway 97, is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Admission is $5.55 for adults, five dollars for senior citizens, and $2.75 for children ages five through twelve. Members and children four years old and younger enter free. An exhibit catalogue and related materials will be available in the museum store.

FORT *(continued from page 9)*
tains a small but impressive display of local Hispanic religious folk art.

Fort Garland hosts several special events each year. One is the Fort Garland Rendezvous of Cultures, held each Memorial Day weekend to celebrate the Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo cultures that have mingled in the area.

In June a festival commemorates the purchase of the fort site. In late July or early August the First Colorado Volunteers set up an infantry camp for a weekend. Costumed reenactors show military life at a mid-1860s Colorado Territory fort.

Though the era of the mountain men was long gone by Fort Garland's time, many were the mountain men who passed through the area. As such, the fort now hosts a mountain man rendezvous every Labor Day weekend. The fort is also the site of a community Christmas celebration each year.

Fort Garland is located just off US Highway 160 in the town of Fort Garland, Colorado, twenty-five miles east of Alamosa and about eighty-five miles north of Taos. The fort's hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily from April 1 to October 31. The fort keeps the same hours between November 1 and March 30, but is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday. Admission is two dollars for adults and one dollar for senior citizens and children ages six to sixteen. Admission is free for Colorado Historical Society members. For more information telephone (719) 379-3512.

Western Roundup is a report on places to go and things to see associated with the history of the Old West. Submissions are welcome. Information on scheduled events should be submitted at least four months prior to the event. Items on historic places are also welcome. Send information including photos to: Western Roundup, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076.

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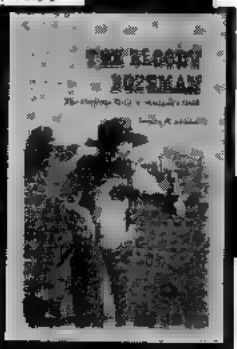

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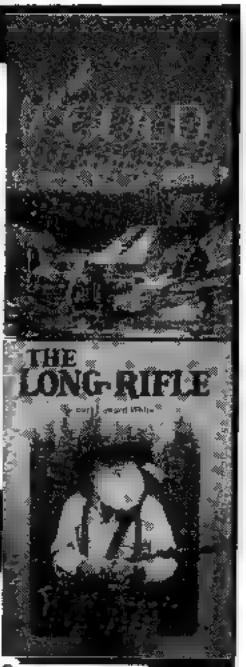

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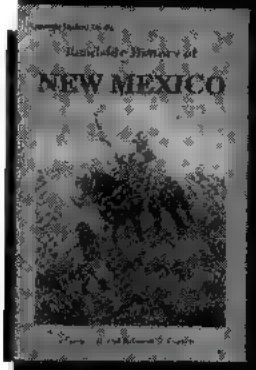

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Bill Mackin

Photos by Nancy S. Bostain

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Billy the Kid's Grave

By CHUCK PARSONS

A headstone in the old government cemetery in Fort Sumner, New Mexico, marks the graves of Billy the Kid, Charles Bowdre, and Tom O'Folliard, all three supposedly buried side-by-side. Jerry A. Parker, 15150 Kleberg Road, Lot 57, Dallas, Texas 75253, questions the accuracy of the stone, finding it hard to believe it marks the exact burial site of even one of the men.

Mr. Parker is no doubt correct in surmising that the marker was placed perhaps arbitrarily. Bowdre and O'Folliard were killed some months before the Kid and there may have been no actual markers on their graves, other than perhaps a stone or small cross. Originally, a small wooden cross marked the spot where the Kid was buried. Over the years winds, floods, vandals, and the removal of soldiers' bodies to the Santa Fe National Cemetery caused the Kid's exact burial spot to become lost.

The events of 1880–81 inspired no great interest until 1926 when Walter Noble Burns visited Lincoln County and wrote *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, which caused the Kid's name to become a household word. The large headstone which visitors see today may mark the general area of the three graves, but certainly not the exact spots.

Mystery Photograph

Shirley M. Chipman, 307 North Second Street, Banning, California 92220, contributed the accompanying photograph of three unknown men. "I have had the original, a tintype, of this photo about twenty years and originally acquired it at an auction," she writes. "Because of the way the three individuals are dressed and their tough looking demeanor I've often wondered if they are desperadoes. The center figure especially looks familiar."

Yes, the seated man bears a striking resemblance to outlaw Kid Curry. Perhaps our readers can help us out with the identification of these men.

TRUE WEST reader Shirley M. Chipman asks for help identifying these men.

Stages and Indians

Western magazine collector Arnold Stebner, 3111 Sand Bar, Orange, California 92665, has two questions on topics as diverse as stagecoaches and Indian chiefs. First he would like to know how many stage companies operated between 1850 and the 1890s.

That is nearly impossible to answer with any certainty. Perhaps hundreds of stage lines operated during that time; some of them were short-lived, others thrived for years. I can identify some of the better known lines.

Banning Stage Lines of southern California provided service from San Diego to Portland, Oregon; the Santa Fe Trail line ran from Independence, Missouri, to New Mexico; the Central Overland followed the Pony Express route from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California; and the San Antonio-San Diego line ran from south Texas through El Paso, Tucson, and Yuma.

Of course there were many other lines. Mr. Stebner and other readers might enjoy Ralph Moody's 1967 book *Stagecoach West*.

Mr. Stebner also asks, in my opinion, which of the better known Indian chiefs contributed the most to history. Perhaps Sitting Bull, Cochise, Geronimo, Quanah Parker, and Chief Joseph contributed most significantly to western history and our perception of the Indian Wars.

Ashley's Men

Ted Mains, 1823 E. Star View Circle, Cottonwood, Arizona 86326, offers a correction to an item in my March 1992 column about William Henry Ashley. In that issue I wrote that Ashley's group was part of the American Fur Company.

Mr. Mains explains that Ashley's group did join with a force from the American Fur Company, but was never part of it. In fact, the two groups were in competition with one another.

Dutch Henry

As a young boy on his father's homestead in Saskatchewan, TRUE WEST reader Oscar Coe, 97 East Tulane Road, Columbus, Ohio 43202, heard stories about a horse thief known as "Dutch Henry." In fact, Mr. Coe says the man spent a night at his family's place. He writes for more information on the outlaw.

At least two men were called "Dutch Henry," the better-known being Henry Born, a Manitowac, Wisconsin, native born July 2, 1849. Both his parents were born in Germany, and he perhaps grew up bilingual with a heavy accent. Born hunted buffalo on the plains with such men as Bill Tilghman and Bat Masterson, and earned a reputation as a horse thief. He married Ida Dillabaugh in 1900 and settled down in Colorado. Born died of pneumonia January 10, 1921, at Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

The lesser-known "Dutch Henry" was Henry Ieuch, alias Henry Stewart among other names. Ieuch stole horses along the Canada-Montana border. United States officials and the North West Mounted Police sought Ieuch, but

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he eluded them. In April 1906 a body was found in the timber in Roseau County, Minnesota; many believed the remains to be Ieuch's. Alex McKenzie, one of Ieuch's old gang members, was arrested, convicted of Ieuch's murder, and sentenced to life in the Minnesota state prison.

The story did not end there, as on January 9, 1910, Mounties caught a man identified as Dutch Henry. Enough doubt fell on McKenzie's guilt that he was pardoned October 25, 1913.

In his letter to me, Oscar Coe remembered meeting Dutch Henry. "I was about six years old at the time but I remember it well. There were a couple of young single men homesteading in the area and not being very good cooks they had my mother bake bread for them. One evening in the summer of 1909 one of these fellows rode to our place to pick up his bread. Talking to my father he said 'Mr. Coe, I think you are going to get company for I saw a man walking across the prairie in this direction.'

"Sure enough a bit later a stranger walked up into the yard. At first glance he seemed like an old man. He had a long white beard. He asked if he could get something to eat. My dad said 'Sure, come on in the house,' but the stranger said he would rather stay outside. My mother fixed him a plate of food and a cup of tea, and when my father took his food to him he noticed that although he had a white beard he had the hands of a younger man. When he got close he could see that the beard was a fake. At that time my father recognized him from the wanted posters he had seen. . . .The next morning my folks saw the stranger walking across the prairie. . . .At breakfast my father told us he had recognized our visitor as Dutch Henry. Since we farmed with oxen and my father's saddle horse wasn't there at the time there were no horses on our place for him to steal."

If you have a question, send it to Chuck Parsons, Western Publications, P.O. Box 2107, Stillwater, OK 74076. Please keep questions brief. Sign your full name and address, including zip code. Names and addresses will be published if question is used. Space limitations may not permit us to use all questions.

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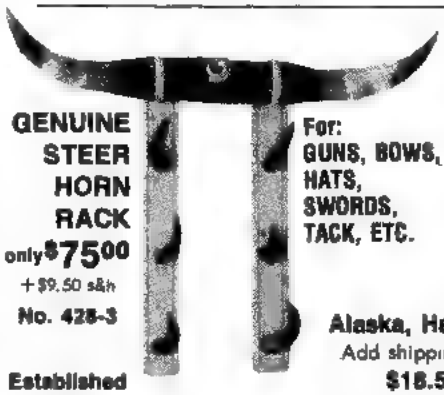

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THE Amazing Case OF ALEXANDER JESTER

By GLENN SHIRLEY

Author's Photo

Alexander Jester

A farmer stated that he had met the wagons on Hulen lane and "saw a body in the rear wagon, covered with a buffalo hide, save the feet." At Hulen Ford, he noticed a hole cut in the ice. The wagons had stopped at that point, "a heavy object dragged to the creek bank and dumped in. There was blood on the snow."

An old saw states that, as the years roll by, public opinion will modify and the desire to execute vengeance on a cold-blooded murderer will degenerate into passive indifference. Not so with the wrath of John Warne "Bet-you-a-million" Gates, American promoter and daring speculator, of Chicago, who championed the pursuit and trial of the man he believed killed his brother in the West in 1871. Gates' favorite Biblical text was "an eye for an eye," and he thirsted for the blood of his brother's slayer "even as the hunted doe panteth for the waters."

THE SUMMER of 1870, John was sixteen years old, his brother Gilbert eighteen—sons of Ansel A. and Mary Gates, of West Chicago, DuPage County. Gilbert was five feet seven inches tall, with dark brown hair, hazel eyes, and weighed 145 pounds. He was in poor health and decided on a trip to the buffalo ranges of western Kansas as a cure for his ailments and for recreation. Hides represented money and Gilbert was a good hunter; the trip bade well. His parents outfitted him with a fine team his father had raised and a covered wagon well supplied for the journey. He took along, in particular, a small leather trunk of clothing that included a suit of underwear his mother had made for him; a muzzle-loading gun and powder horn; a pocket watch that had belonged to his uncle George Gates (killed in the Civil War), which the family was keeping as a relic; and a shepherd dog named "Abe Lincoln."

Gilbert left West Chicago on August 26, accompanied by a friend, Charles Hazelhurst, who was returning to his home at Augusta, Kansas. They were six weeks on the road, going by way of Quincy, Illinois; Paris and Sedalia, Missouri; and entering Kansas at Fort Scott. There they met one Alexander Jester, who was freighting for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad. The Santa Fe was building toward Newton, soon to become the new end-of-the-track town for longhorn herds from Texas, and had reached Doyle

Both: Author's Photos

IS HE JESTER OR HILL?

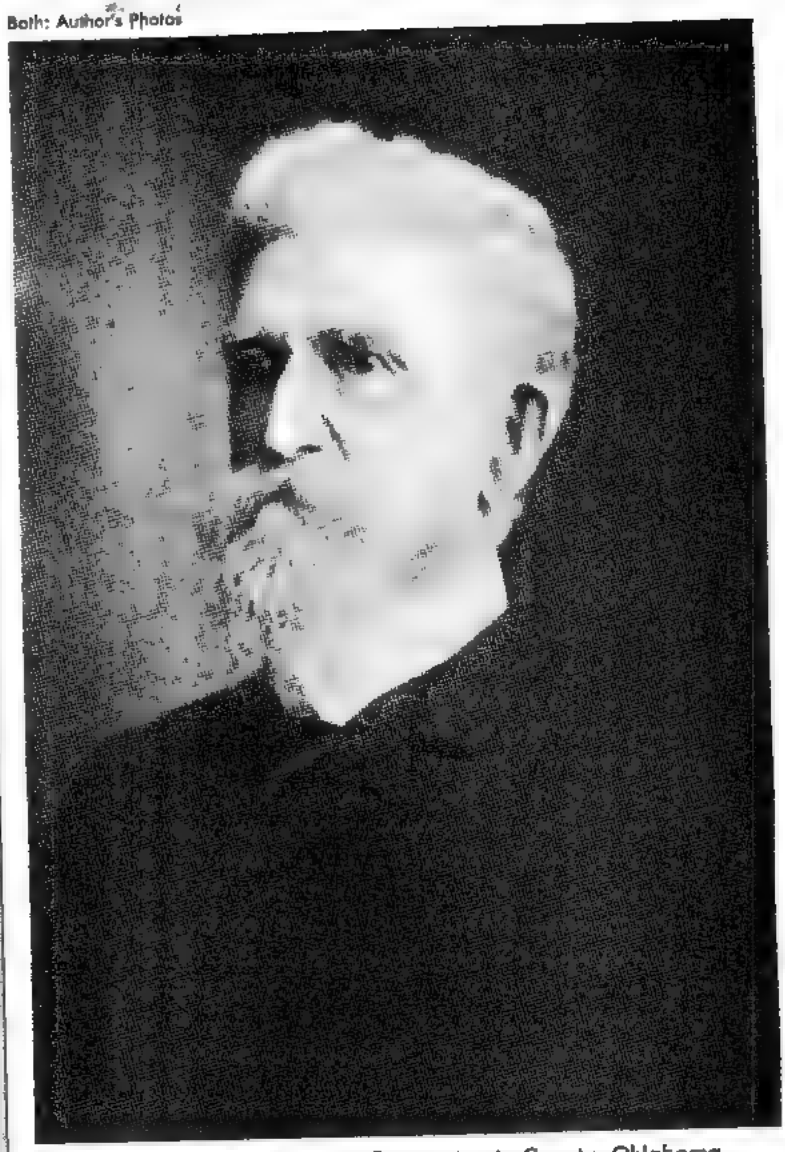
The Shawnee Man Arrested for Murder.

BETRAYED BY A SISTER.

History of the Crime—Shawnee Democrat's Interview With the Parties—Looks Like Spite Work.

Jefferson City, June 24.—Sheriff Nelson of Audrain county, was heretoday and received a requestion from Governor Stephens for the return to that county for trial, for the murder of Alexander Jester, who is under arrest at Shawnee, O. T. Jester is wanted for the killing of Gilbert Gates in 1871. He broke jail and escaped to Oklahoma where he has since resided and accumulated much property.

Oklahoma State Capital, June 25, 1899.



Probate Judge J.D.F. Jennings, Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma Territory. His action in the Jester case was ruled arbitrary and illegal.

Creek (later named Florence). Jester needed an extra team and wagon, and put Gilbert to work. Hazelhurst continued to Augusta.

Jester was forty-eight years old, six feet tall, with a "peculiar-shaped" Roman nose "easily remembered," a scraggly beard and mustache, dull gray eyes, and large bony hands that made him appear "stronger than he actually was." He mentioned having homesteaded near Valley Center on the Arkansas north of Wichita, Sedgwick County.

Gilbert worked for Jester until November, then rejoined Hazelhurst at Augusta to hunt buffalo during the winter. Ansel and Mary Gates sent word to Hazelhurst, expressing anxiety about their son's continued absence. Gilbert wrote that he would return shortly. Early in January 1871, he left Augusta in his wagon with three choice buffalo hides he had cured, his dog Abe Lincoln, and leading a buffalo calf that he was taking home to domesticate.

A few days later, Gilbert was seen leaving Fort Scott with Alexander Jester, each driving a team and wagon, Jester saying something about visiting his boyhood home at Hagerstown, Indiana, where he had lived until after the Civil War. The last week in January, Ansel Gates received a letter from Gilbert. It mentioned no traveling companion but bore the postmark of Renick, Missouri, a village twenty miles southwest of Paris, seat of Monroe County.

Another month passed with no further word from Gilbert. In addition to that uneasiness, Mrs. Gates was awakened by a dream in which it seemed that while at a funeral she had stepped up to view the corpse and had seen Gilbert lying in the coffin. The premonition so affected her that Ansel Gates set out at once to search for their son.

On March 1, Gates struck the trail Gilbert and a man of Jester's description had taken from Renick to Middle Grove, in southwestern Monroe County, where they had stopped January 24, "having with them a shepherd dog and a buffalo calf which they were exhibiting, charging ten cents admittance. . . . Almost the entire population of Middle Grove bought tickets." The two had left next morning, traveling east on the road to Paris, after which Jester was observed on a little-used byway with the covered wagons, alone.

A Middle Grove man named Atkinson and his eighteen-year-old nephew told

Both Author's Photos

Cassius M. Barnes, governor of Oklahoma Territory, honored Missouri's requisition and considered the manner of removal of the prisoner from Oklahoma Territory "an outrage."

J. W. GATES IS A NEMESIS,

Follows the Trail of His Brother's Murder

WITH A BLOODHOUND'S TENACITY

Is Afraid Jester Will Escape And Telegraphs Governor Barnes About the Matter.

If Alexander Jester hopes to escape the hangman's noose he had better prove an alibi, when he is finally arraigned for the murder of Gilbert Gates, in Missouri [illegible] back in 1871. Public opinion will insist in time and the desire to execute summary vengence on the person of a cold blooded murderer, will as the years roll by, degenerate into a passive indifference.

Not so the wrath of the brother; at least

Oklahoma State Capital, July 2, 1899.

Gates, "There was a deep snow on the ground. We were driving up a narrow lane to get on the Paris road . . . saw this man get out of the front wagon, go to the back wagon, and get under the canvas. In a short while he got out, tied the team behind the front wagon, then got into the front wagon and drove east into the timber at Hulen Ford, on Allen Creek. After the wagons disappeared, we noticed bloodstains on the snow, but just supposed it was caused by one of the horses getting hurt someway."

Earlier that morning, Mrs. Amanda Clarke, of Middle Grove, had seen the wagons turn off the Paris road. "A gust of wind blew aside the curtain on the back wagon," Mrs. Clarke said, "and I saw a body stretched out, head toward the rear and feet resting on some object immediately behind the seat." Later, the woman "came across a large splotch of blood in the snow."

A farmer, William Maxey, stated that he had met the wagons that afternoon on Hulen lane and "positively saw a body in the rear wagon, covered with a buffalo hide, save the feet." At Hulen Ford, he noticed a hole had been cut in the ice. The wagons had stopped at that point, "a heavy object dragged to the creek bank and dumped in. There was blood on the snow crust about the hole."

At Gates' behest and his offer of a large reward, several Middle Grove citizens waded the creek for nearly five miles after the spring thaw. They found no trace of a body.

At Paris, E.T. Wetmore told the distressed father that a man of Jester's description had spent the night of January 25 at his livery stable. "He had two outfits, the buffalo calf and dog seen at Middle Grove . . . slept in the wagon that belonged to your boy . . . left before daylight."

Gates laid his findings before Sheriff W.H. Ownby, of Monroe County. The sheriff ordered his brother, P.S. Ownby, a deputy at Middle Grove, to make a full investigation.

Ansel Gates continued eastward. He lost the trail after the wagons crossed the Mississippi at Hannibal, but found it again at Springfield, Illinois. Livery stable operator Herman Hofferkamp remembered, "The man stayed at my barn for about a week . . sold the buffalo calf for cash . . . had some clothing that didn't fit him and a leather trunk. He left me a very intelligent dog, which I kept." Gates recovered Abe Lincoln.

The father next struck pay dirt at

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Decatur, Illinois, where Jester had sold three buffalo hides to a merchant named Dennis. Dennis had taken the hides to the Dunham Tannery. They were still soaking in the vat. Blood was detected on the hairy side of one of them. A chemical analysis "showed it to be human blood." Gates obtained the hides, convinced they were the ones in his son's possession when he left Augusta.

The father hurried to Hagerstown, Indiana, hoping to intercept Jester with Gilbert's team and wagon. Jester had been there, admitted Mrs. Cornelia Street, a widowed step-sister, saying nothing of his trip east except that he had "traded for a new outfit." He had sold his own team and dilapidated wagon and left Hagerstown with this new outfit the last of March to return to his homestead in Kansas.

Gates hurried to Sedgwick County and called on Sheriff Walter Walker. Walker was well acquainted with Jester, as was Constable L.D. Fisher of the Valley Center district. They made careful inquiry. Jester was not home and his wife denied knowing his whereabouts. So Gates went to the farm and "looked it over in the ostensible view of buying it." When he offered a good price, the woman told him where her husband could be located. Walker and Fisher arrested Jester on May 2, fishing in the Little Arkansas.

Gates identified the team he had raised. In the wagon was part of Gilbert's clothing, including the underwear his mother had made, and his gun. The trunk was missing. Jester was carrying the watch which the family had kept as a relic.

Jester told Gates, "Your boy and me traveled together until we went into camp past Middle Grove. He took a sudden notion during the night to go to Texas. I paid him $350 for his outfit, watch, gun and young buffalo to make the trip. It's a mystery to me why he didn't take his dog."

Jester declined to comment on the discoveries made by Ansel Gates at Middle Grove, in Illinois and Indiana.

Sheriff Walker notified the Missouri authorities. A warrant was issued in Monroe County. Deputy Ownby went to Jefferson City, obtained a requisition from Governor B. Gratz Brown on the Kansas governor, then took a train to the Santa Fe terminus at Florence, thence by stage to Wichita. Jester was given a hearing before Judge Allen E. Dodge, the requisition was honored, and Ownby departed with his prisoner for Florence.

According to Ownby, "We reached Kansas City by special train that evening. Here I found a telegram from my father, telling me that a mob intended meeting the Wabash train at Renick and hang the prisoner. I took the Hannibal & St. Joseph line to Shelbine, hired a buggy there, and drove across country to Paris.

"Jester waived preliminary hearing. The grand jury indicted him for murder, but for some reason he was not tried at the next term of court. He got a change of venue to Audrain County, and was removed to jail at Mexico, Missouri, the designated place of trial. Jester's wife disappeared from Kansas. In mid-November 1871, he tunneled out of the Mexico jail, and we could find no trace of him."

Jester told Gates, "Your boy and me traveled together until we went into camp past Middle Grove. He took a sudden notion during the night to go to Texas. I paid him $350 for his outfit, watch, gun and young buffalo to make the trip. It's a mystery to me why he didn't take his dog."

Young John Gates had joined his father in Missouri following Jester's arrest and "saw the suspect several times in the Paris and Mexico jails." Jester's escape filled him with wrath. The family offered a $1,500 reward for his recapture, and in their burial plot at West Chicago they placed a stone shaft bearing the following epitaph: "Gilbert W., son of A.A. and Mary Gates, was murdered in Missouri by Alexander Jester, January 25, 1871, aged 19 years and 25 days."

The accusation gained credibility in 1877, when some boys who were swimming in Allen Creek pulled out the arm of a young man, thought to be Gilbert's. It revived the interest of Missouri authorities, but Jester remained unapprehended. Vengeance on the murderer of his brother continued as one of John Gates' burning ambitions.

John began his business career in St. Louis selling iron and steel products for the Cleveland Rolling Mill company. The barbed wire industry was in its infancy. Patents were controlled by the Washburn & Moen company of Massachusetts, with all other manufacturers as licensees. Seeing enormous profits and believing the patents would not hold in law, Gates did a little manufacturing on his own in an obscure St. Louis factory. Washburn & Moen naturally went after the so-called "moonshiners," but Gates continued to worry his persecutors until a federal circuit judge declared the Washburn & Moen patents invalid.

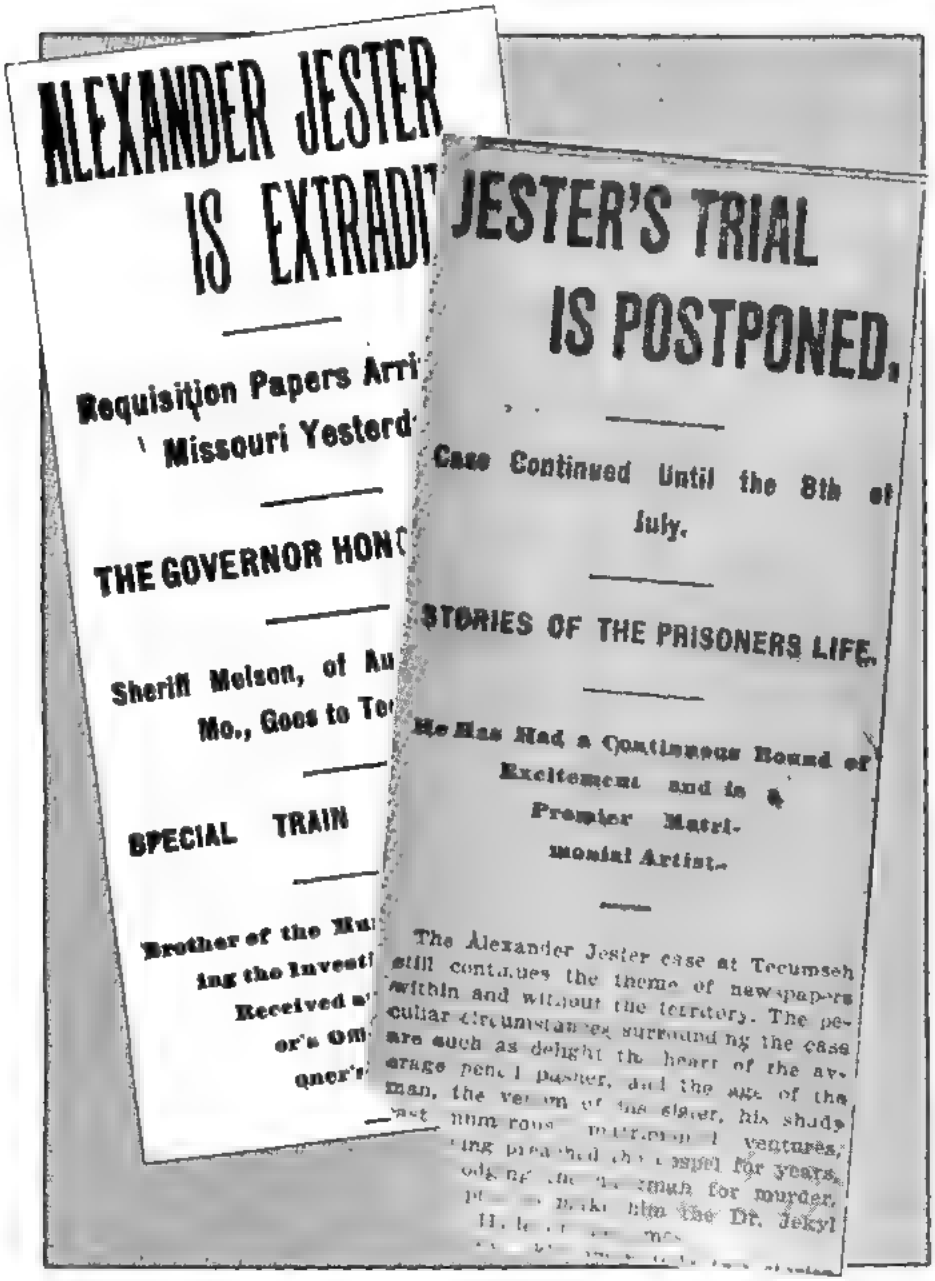
Using his St. Louis factory and another in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as a nucleus, Gates organized a strong company which he operated so successfully that, in 1889, he began absorption of some twenty barbed wire plants in the United States. By 1893, he was president of Consolidated Steel and Wire and the Illinois Steel Company. He moved to Chicago, where he could keep in touch with men of large capital and ideas, and in 1898, at age forty-three, controlled the barbed wire industry of the country.

Gates boasted that he "worked twenty-two hours and slept two," and had never been beaten in anything he undertook. Throughout those years, he expressed his willingness to suspend his efforts in all lines, at any time, and expend any portion of his wealth necessary to apprehend and convict Alexander Jester.

The murder case took a surprising turn on June 21, 1899, when Sheriff Charles W. Simmons, of Sedgwick County, Kansas, received the following letter:

> I wish to make a statement to you in regard to Alexander Jester, who was arrested near Valley Center in 1871 for killing a young man for his team, watch and clothing. He was sent to Missouri and broke jail. He is my brother, but I want him punished for that crime. I know of my own personal knowledge that he is guilty as charged. . . . He is living here at Shawnee, Oklahoma Territory, and is known as W.A. Hill. . . .
>
> Respectfully,
> Cornelia Street

Simmons notified Sheriff M.N. Melson at Mexico, Missouri, and the authorities of Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma Territory. On Friday night, June 23, Deputy Sheriff Howard Smith of Shawnee took the so-named Hill into custody.



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JESTER'S TRIAL
IS POSTPONED.

Case Continued Until the 8th of July.

STORIES OF THE PRISONERS LIFE.

He Has Had a Continuous Round of Excitement and is a Premier Matrimonial Artist.

The Alexander Jester case at Tecumseh still continues the theme of newspapers within and without the territory. The peculiar circumstances surrounding the case are such as delight the heart of the average penny paster, and the age of the man, the venom of his sister, his shady numerous matrimonial ventures, preached the gospel for years, lodging the gallows for murder, Dr. Jekyl

Both, Author's Photos

Oklahoma State Capital, June 28, 1899 (left) and July 1, 1899.

Mrs. Street told Deputy Smith that she and her brother had moved to Shawnee a few months previously and purchased a three-roomed house on two lots. Each occupied a separate part of the structure. They quarreled constantly, and each tried to get the other to leave. "I wrote the letter to Sheriff Simmons because I feared my brother," Mrs. Street said, "and because I was prompted by the Lord. . . . For the last seven years I have scarcely slept. . . . I prayed to forget the crime, and it would seem to me as if I could hear the Lord saying, 'You are as much a sinner as your brother.'"

Hill was clothed in the "cheapest maud" and had but twenty cents when arrested. He stated that his interest in the Shawnee property was his "earthly possessions," claimed to be eighty years old, and "appeared debilitated." Mrs. Street said that she was sixty-eight years old; that he was seventy-six—and faking.

The old man maintained, "My name is William Alexander Hill. I was baptized under that name in 1858. I was born in North Carolina in 1819. My father died before I was born. My mother remarried, and we moved to Henry County, Indiana. There I grew to manhood and enlisted at Richmond when the Civil War broke out. Since the war I have been traveling the West, preaching the gospel. I know nothing of Gilbert Gates or his family. This wicked woman made the accusation to prevent my marriage to a woman she don't like. . . . She thinks I'm crazy. I think she is filled with the devil."

Mrs. Street countered, "He was thirteen when his father died. His mother married my father, Isaac Jester, and he was known as Jester after we moved to Indiana. . . . When eighteen, he married Delilah Bryant and his mother started him in housekeeping so far as her means allowed. Once he kicked his wife in the side, nearly killing her. He knocked me down during a visit to his mother's house years ago, and when I tried to escape, he stabbed me in the arm with a big dirk knife. He always carried a big dirk knife. He is a vicious man.

"After escaping jail in Missouri, he went to Texas and claimed to be a preacher. His wife died in 1883. In 1889 he moved to Norman [Oklahoma Territory], and since then has been married and divorced twice. He was to be married again next Sunday to a woman who has a bunch of children, and I knew I would be turned out of my home."

Mrs. Street added, "I was told by his first wife before she died that Gilbert Gates' trunk was burned and thrown into the Arkansas River."

Thus began a great legal controversy.

HILL WAS jailed at Tecumseh, and his attorney, W.R. Asher, applied for a writ of habeas corpus before Probate Judge J.D.F. Jennings, to show he was being unlawfully detained as Jester. Judge Jennings was the father of Al and Frank Jennings, notorious train robbers recently sentenced to federal prison upon failure to prove an alibi. Pottawatomie County Sheriff W.B. Trousdale opined that, in Judge Jennings, Hill had a "sympathizer." County Attorney L.G. Pitman vigorously protested the writ, claiming that Hill was "lying to gain time in hopes of breaking jail again." While the public agreed that Hill, if he was Jester, should be punished for his crime, Mrs. Streets' "unnatural act of a sister in delivering her brother to the hangman brings down upon her only scorn and aversion." Attorney Asher propounded, "Her motive is to share in the $1500 reward. . . the letter she wrote is false and her brother never killed anyone."

Judge Jennings granted the application and set a hearing for Monday, July 3, allowing Hill time to produce witnesses to prove he was in Texas when Gilbert Gates disappeared.

Pitman summoned Sheriff Simmons from Wichita with Cornelia Street's letter, and telegraphed John Gates in Chicago. Gates reached Tecumseh the

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night of June 27. Next morning, he entered the county jail, accompanied by Pitman and Sheriff Trousdale.

Jailer Elias Riddle had fifteen prisoners sitting in the corridors. So indelibly stamped in Gates' memory were the features of the man charged with murdering his brother that he approached Hill without hesitation and asked, "Do you remember me?"

The old man gave him a pitiable gaze and answered, "No."

Gates demanded, "Don't you remember me visiting you many times in the Paris and Mexico jails? Don't you think it is time you admit taking the life of my brother, cutting a hole in the ice and shoving his body into Allen Creek?"

The old man grew very nervous and requested, "Don't talk about the death of your brother."

Gates told Pitman and Trousdale, "This man is Alexander Jester as certain as God reigns in Heaven."

In Missouri, Sheriff Melson obtained a requisition from Governor Lon V. Stephens at Jefferson City, and entrained for Oklahoma Territory to return Hill to Audrain County for trial. Governor Cassius M. Barnes honored the requisition at Guthrie, June 26. Melson hurried to Oklahoma City, where he boarded a special train for Tecumseh, "for fear Hill would be released and again escape."

Already a number of persons had appeared to prove the prisoner was innocent. Two Texas men alleged he was living at Denton in 1871 and was known as William Alexander Hill. One of several citizens who knew him during the time he lived at Norman remembered, "When the Sac and Fox country was opened in 1891, he went there and secured a claim, which he sold for $800. He returned to Norman with a new wagon, team and harness. Afterwards he furnished proof of his war service and secured a disability pension. He at once bought a buggy—seemed to have a passion for new rigs and women. He separated from his wife and remarried. His last wife divorced him last winter, and he and his sister moved to Shawnee. He never preached any that I knew of, but he attended church and was called 'Old Man' Hill."

The third wife testified in the prosecution's favor, "I secured my divorce in the district court of Cleveland County on account of non-support and cruelty. Though I knew him as Hill, he gave his age as 76 when we were married. He's putting it on rather thick . . . his signs of physical failing are only adopted to arouse sympathy."

Attorney Asher submitted a new list of witnesses, and Judge Jennings postponed the hearing until July 8.

John Gates had returned to Chicago on an emergency matter. He telegraphed Governor Barnes, June 30, "Is it possible that the ends of justice can be defeated in Pottawatomie County? My identification of Jester was complete. He can also be identified by many residents of Monroe County . . . . I fear that after 28 years, justice will be defeated unless you can suggest some way in which Jester can be removed to Missouri promptly."

Governor Barnes replied, "I think you can rely upon the court giving just consideration to the case . . . . Suggest you secure good counsel in behalf of sheriff holding by warrant."

County Attorney Pitman did not like the course the proceedings were taking and called on B.F. Burwell, associate justice of the Supreme Court for the Third Judicial District at Oklahoma City. Justice Burwell assured him that Judge Jennings had no jurisdiction and that he would speedily act upon an application for a writ of mandamus, which he advised Pitman to pursue.

Pitman admitted afterward, "I immediately returned to Tecumseh. The Missouri sheriff had been kind and friendly toward me, and after some consultation, an abduction was decided upon. Sheriff Trousdale was favorable to this plan when assured that Justice Burwell had given his opinion that the action of Judge Jennings was arbitrary and illegal. He suggested that we go to Shawnee and wait until midnight so attention would not be attracted to us being together in Tecumseh and our plan suspicioned . . . ."

At 3:00 a.m., Sunday, July 2, a special train arrived in Oklahoma City from Shawnee, with Hill in custody of Trousdale, Deputy Smith, and Pitman. Sheriff Melson was in charge of the party. The officer refused a *Daily Oklahoman* reporter an interview with the prisoner—"would say absolutely nothing except that the requisition papers were in proper form and signed by the governor." At 4:00 a.m., connection was made with a northbound Santa Fe train, allegedly ordered by John Gates. Deputy Smith accompanied Sheriff Melson with his prisoner to Mexico, Missouri.

The *Oklahoman* called the removal "kidnaping" but noted, "The efficacy of modern official methods are properly vindicated . . . the reckless daring in which the prisoner was borne away in triumph is entitled to a mention on the temple of fame." Governor Barnes considered it "an outrage" and felt that the courts should "inquire into the conduct of the Tecumseh officers."

Jailer Elias Riddle had fifteen prisoners sitting in the corridors. So indelibly stamped in Gates' memory were the features of the man charged with killing his brother that he approached Hill without hesitation and asked, "Do you remember me?" The old man gave him a pitiable gaze and answered, "No."

Attorney Asher filed information before Judge Jennings charging Pitman, Trousdale, and Jailer Riddle with "contempt of court." Justice Burwell issued a writ restraining Judge Jennings from proceeding with the contempt cases. Pitman filed a motion to dismiss the habeas corpus, alleging want of jurisdiction, and the matter was quashed.

At Mexico, Missouri, ex-Deputy Sheriff P.S. Ownby, ex-Sheriff W.H. White of Audrain County, and others around at the time of Jester's 1871 arrest and indictment, said Hill was Alexander Jester, and the old man no longer denied it. However, after retaining as counsel Mexico attorney P.H. Cullen and T.P. Bashaw, of St. Louis, who had defended him in 1871, he told the Mexico *Intelligencer*, "If hell was to open and I knew I would fall into it, I would still say I never killed Gilbert Gates."

STRANGELY, all important papers in the 1871 hearing had been lost. The order for change of venue and the indictment did not state the manner in which Gates came to his death. A rumor spread that the prisoner would soon be released. Monroe County Attorney T.T. Rodes declared it "pure rubbish" and announced that he would present new evidence showing how Gates was killed to obtain a new indictment on which Jester could be tried at Paris.

During July and August, both prosecution and defense "prepared for a desperate struggle." John Gates reportedly sent Rodes a check for $1,500

ALEXANDER JESTER FREE.

The Murderer of Gilbert Gates Still Unknown.

JURY TOOK THREE BALLOTS.

The Octegenarian Acquitted of the Awful Charge.

WILL RETURN TO OKLAHOMA SOON

Trial Lasted Four Weeks—A Most Hotly Contested Case—Noted Criminal Lawyers on Both Sides—Verdict Gives Satisfaction at New London.

Author's Photo

Oklahoma State Capital, August 2, 1900.

with which to secure evidence and witnesses and employed ex-Governor Charles P. Johnson, of St. Louis, to assist in the prosecution. William S. Forrest of Chicago, attorney for Gates' enterprises, "lent a helping hand." Pinkerton detectives were sent to Sedgwick County, Kansas, "to interview witness and examine records of Jester's trial there." Rodes spent several days at Middle Grove, "where he interviewed all the old witnesses in the Jester case, and found five new ones who made very important disclosures." Attorney Johnson obtained the application made by Jester under the Civil War disability act, in which he gave his name as Alexander Jester, a member of Company G, Thirty-Sixth Indiana Volunteers—"conclusive evidence that the Reverend William A. Hill and Alexander Jester are the same man." Cullen and Bashaw basked in the belief that the state had "no stronger case than in 1871" and pointed to "the inability of the state to produce the dead body of Gilbert Gates."

On September 20, Jester was brought before Circuit Judge E.M. Hughes at Mexico. The prosecution moved that the old murder charge be dismissed. The motion was granted, and Jester was a free man.

A moment later, Sheriff J.W. Clark of Monroe County intercepted Jester in the corridor and read him a new warrant charging him with the same crime for which he had been under indictment. Jester said, "Well, I reckon I'm *your* prisoner now." The sheriff rushed him to jail at Paris "for fear he would be rescued by an Oklahoma delegation." Next day, Jester was arraigned before Justice of the Peace James T. Moss. He refused to answer any question put to him by Rodes or Justice Moss, and was remanded to jail to await preliminary examination.

Sixty-five witnesses from five states were examined during the preliminary at Paris in mid-October. The aged Ansel Gates minutely described the outfit his son had left home with, his failure to hear from him, and his long search through Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and to Valley Center, Kansas, where Jester was arrested. Charles Hazelhurst identified Gilbert's clothing, gun, watch, and said the dog's name was Abe. Several witnesses testified that after Jester left Middle Grove he was in possession of young Gates' team, wagon, dog, and buffalo calf. William Maxey and Amanda Clarke told how they had seen Jester alone the morning of January 25, 1871, with two outfits and "the body of a young man in the wagon he was leading behind the other."

Throughout the hearing defense attorneys questioned witnesses as to whether John Gates, the Chicago "capitalist," had advanced money to secure their testimony. The prosecution admitted that Gates was paying the expenses of the witnesses to the Missouri state line and expending money necessary to secure the conviction of his brother's slayer.

Jester was ordered held for action of the grand jury, without bail.

The grand jury indicted Jester on October 20. When formally arraigned before Circuit Judge David H. Ebey, he pleaded not guilty and made affidavit alleging prejudice against him in Monroe County, asking for a change of venue. The prosecution bitterly contested the application. The defense argued that the case had been dismissed at Mexico and brought back to Paris because the prosecution believed Jester could be more easily convicted in Monroe County. Judge Ebey ordered the case transferred to Ralls County.

The trial began at New London, July 9, 1900. Newspapermen swarming into the little city from throughout the Midwest billed it as "one of the most famous murder trials in the history of Missouri," and elaborated:

> The courtroom is packed to capacity. . . . The jury is composed principally of farmers, three-fourths of them born since the alleged crime was committed.
>
> Prosecuting attorney Rodes is assisted by Johnson of St. Louis, Forrest of Chicago, and several other celebrated criminal lawyers. J.G. Hoffman, assistant superintendent of the Pinkerton Detective Agency and several other detectives who worked on the case are here in the interest of the state. . . . Jester's sister will be one of the principal witnesses against him. . . .
>
> Two things will prove a strong assistance to the defense. There is a

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strong prejudice against trusts in Missouri and John W. Gates is the brother of the man Jester is accused of having killed. Then age is an unspeakable factor—Jester is now a tottering wreck and supposedly over 80 years old

Mr. Forrest said last night: "We hope to overcome these two factors by such convincing evidence that the jury can do nothing but convict him."

Testimony began July 11 and continued two weeks. Twice the number of witnesses took the stand than at the preliminary in October 1899. Ansel Gates repeated in detail the search for his son and the subsequent arrest of Jester with Gilbert's outfit and personal effects. Tears streamed down his face as he examined some of the articles which had been preserved during the many years. Hazelhurst was so unshakable that the defense admitted Jester had some of Gates' possessions, but "they were included in the outfit he had purchased from the young man when they separated near Middle Grove. The defense also attempted to impeach witnesses Maxey and Clarke, who had seen Jester alone with the wagons the *morning* of January 25. A janitor for the Middle Grove church testified he had met Gates and Jester, both alive, as he was going to church in the *afternoon*.

IN FINAL arguments to the jury July 27, the defense propounded that the state's evidence was "purely circumstantial...the dead body of the young man never has been found...the state has failed to show that he is dead, that he died in Monroe County, Missouri." It pointed further to the presence at the trial and the active work of the Pinkerton detectives, and "made it plain" that the case had been "worked up by men in the hire of John W. Gates, the millionaire steel man"; that the prosecution "does not deny that John W. Gates has paid the expense of witnesses from a distance, and that the hotels are keeping them at his expense."

Judge Ebey instructed, "The members of the jury are the sole judges of the evidence, and unless they believe and find that Gilbert Gates is dead and that he came to his death through the criminal agency of some person and that person is the defendant, and that defendant murdered Gilbert Gates, in the manner and by means charged in some count of the indictment, the jury should acquit the defendant."

The New London *Record* of August 1 reported, "Three ballots were taken ....The first stood nine for acquittal, three for murder in the first degree. The next stood ten for acquittal, two for conviction. The third and last, unanimous for acquittal, was given by the tired jurymen: 'We, the jury, find the defendant, Alexander Jester, not guilty.'

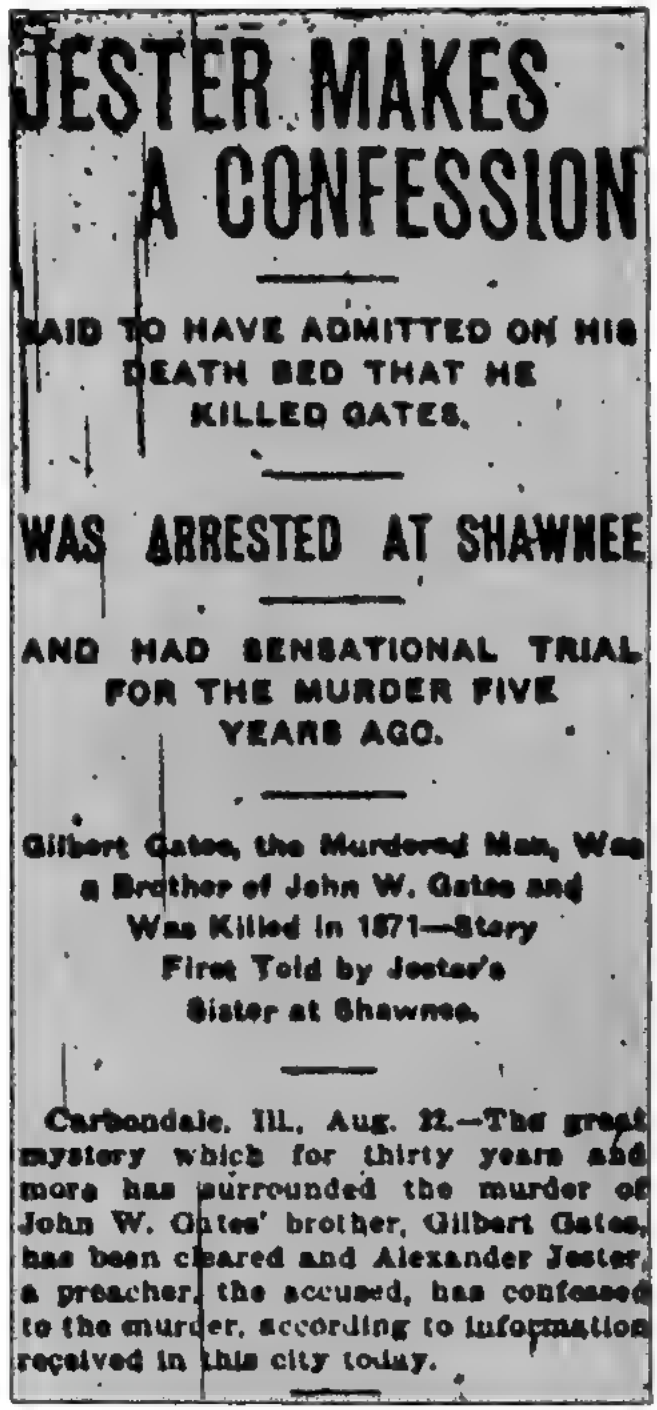
"The old prisoner, worn from watching, sat as if dazed....The courtroom throng sat in breathless silence and seemed hardly to grasp the meaning of the words just spoken.

"Jester, finally realizing the import of the words, arose, his face beaming, and moved toward the jurymen to thank them.... When enabled to disengage himself from his attorneys and friends who surrounded him, he made his way to the hotel. He left here at once for Oklahoma, where he was taken prisoner two years ago."

Jester again took residence in Norman and discarded the name Hill. On August 6, he announced, "I have not yet returned to preaching, although I am preparing a sermon on the sixth commandment." A few weeks later, he left for points in Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana, lecturing on his adventures and tribulations, under the auspices of the attorneys who had defended him.

Early in August 1904, he wrote P.H. Cullen at Mexico, "I am now in my eighty-sixth year and unable to get to the St. Louis Worlds fair." A dispatch to the *Oklahoma State Capital* on August 21 stated, "Bent and shriveled with his years of eventful life, Alexander Jester, the most noted alleged criminal who ever set foot in Shawnee, returned here yesterday after an absence of six years."

Jester died shortly afterwards. The *Carbondale* (Illinois) *Free Press* and Guthrie *Oklahoma State Capital* reported that on his death bed he admitted killing Gilbert Gates by cutting his throat and sinking the body in Allen Creek.



JESTER MAKES A CONFESSION

SAID TO HAVE ADMITTED ON HIS DEATH BED THAT HE KILLED GATES.

WAS ARRESTED AT SHAWNEE

AND HAD SENSATIONAL TRIAL FOR THE MURDER FIVE YEARS AGO.

Gilbert Gates, the Murdered Man, Was a Brother of John W. Gates and Was Killed in 1871—Story First Told by Jester's Sister at Shawnee.

Carbondale, Ill., Aug. 22.—The great mystery which for thirty years and more has surrounded the murder of John W. Gates' brother, Gilbert Gates, has been cleared and Alexander Jester, a preacher, the accused, has confessed to the murder, according to information received in this city today.

Author's Photo

Oklahoma State Capital, August 23, 1904.

Mystic War Shields

By ANGIE IRONS

In the "far times" before the coming of the horse, when Indians had only dogs to carry their burdens, a lone warrior ventured from his camp to hunt upon the prairie. He carried only his bow, knife, and a quiver full of arrows tied tightly to his back. For three days he walked, seeing no game or any other living thing. Still he would not give up. Hunger cried in the bellies of his people, and he walked in the direction of the setting sun, his eyes alert for game.

On the fifth day, as he was topping a grassy slope, he fell exhausted upon the ground and sank into a deep sleep. When he awoke, moonlight pierced the night sky, flooding the plains around him with misty white light. Suddenly he heard a loud noise at the top of a nearby slope, and he jumped to his feet, peering into the semi-darkness.

At the top of the slope, glistening shadowy black against the moonlight, stood an *e'dal pa*, a great buffalo bull. It was tall as a tepee smoke hole, its massive body thick as the fattest tepee, its eyes burning like two fiery coals. The warrior's heart leapt. Never had he seen such a great *pa*! Slowly the beast raised its huge right forefoot, pawing at the slope, and the warrior felt the earth tremble beneath his feet. The warrior wanted to run and hide, but he stood his ground as the mighty *pa* turned its fiery gaze upon him.

"I have been watching your people," said the *pa*, and its voice came like thunder. "You carry no *kyu ni*, no shield, to protect you from your enemy," snorted the *pa* at the trembling warrior.

"Forgive me, great *pa*," the warrior said thinly but politely. "I know nothing of this shield, of this protection about which you speak."

"Do not fear," said the *pa*, "for I have come to teach you."

Gently the *pa* lowered its mighty body until it rested comfortably on the slope. For an instant the *pa* looked at the stars above. Then it turned its attention back to the warrior and began to teach. "My body is your sustenance,

Archives/Manuscript Division, Oklahoma Historical Society

Shield of the Kiowa Hunting Horse hangs above his head in the "honored" place in the tepee.

of the Plains Indians

and just as it provides you with your clothes and your shelter, it shall also provide you with your shield, your defense against your enemies," the *pa* said gently.

For two moons the *pa* taught and the warrior learned. He learned how to smoke the hide of the buffalo, to make it thick and strong. He learned of the visions, ceremonies, songs, and dances that would infuse protective powers into the shield. Finally the teaching ended and the warrior stood with the very first shield strapped tight against his arm.

"You have learned well," said the *pa*. "Now with your war shield to protect you, you are free to hunt in the land of your enemy. Your people will be hungry no more. Go now and teach what you have learned to your people."

With that, the *pa* disappeared into a hole in the ground and the warrior hurried off to his people. They were setting up winter camp when he found them.

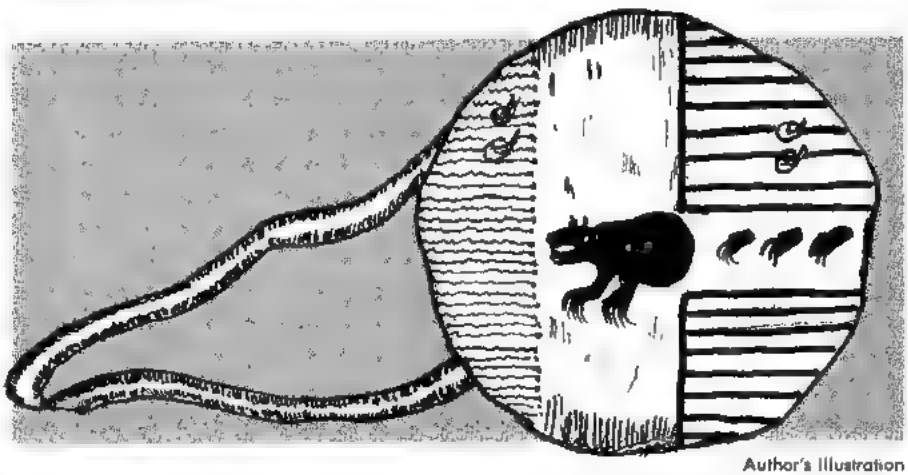
"*Kyu ni*," he held the shield aloft, screaming its name as he approached them. "*Kyu ni!*"

The people rushed to encircle him, their fingers playing over the shield, their voices raised in excited questions. The warrior walked to the center of the camp and hushed the people. He motioned them to the ground, and they sat, their eyes locked on the shield. Quiet came over the camp. The warrior again raised the shield and began to teach.

SUCH WERE the shield's beginnings according to one of the legends most frequently told among the Plains Indians.

Whatever their origins, the shields carried before the arrival of the horse were huge. Often three feet in diameter, they could completely conceal a kneeling man and offered maximum protection from enemy projectiles. Though the shields were heavy and cumbersome, warriors handled them adeptly and used them skillfully in hand-to-hand combat.

In the "far times," possibly because of the shields' size and weight, warriors themselves cared for them. Men also kept all ceremonies, rules, and taboos concerning the shields. Women had little, if anything, to do with the ancient shields. The advent of the horse, however, changed that. The old shields proved too large and cumbersome for mounted combat, so the new shields were smaller.



Author's Illustration

Kiowa war shield with honored bear symbol.

For two moons the pa taught and the warrior learned. He learned how to smoke the hide of the buffalo, to make it thick and strong. He learned of the visions, ceremonies, songs, and dances that would infuse protective powers into the shield. Finally the warrior stood with the very first shield strapped tight against his arm.

To compensate for the loss of size, warriors infused shields with more power through new rituals, dances, songs, visions, and spirit guides. Shield ceremonies and taboos grew to such proportions that men, often gone on hunts, began trusting their care and handling to women.

Although women cared for them, war shields were the most sacred of a warrior's possessions. His shield was the essence of his power, the spirit that protected him in battle and while counting coup. It bore the magic that carried him forward, making him a brave and fearful warrior honored by his tribesmen and enemy alike.

Such power was difficult to obtain. Prayer and ceremony had to accompany every step of a shield's construction. Warriors gave careful thought to their shields' patterns and designs. They prayed and sought visions and the approval of medicine men or esteemed warriors. The Indians called on spirit guides, offered songs, and danced as they made their shields.

In some tribes, close friends and loved ones took part in making a shield. In others, the warrior alone constructed it. Always, however, a medicine man or an esteemed warrior actually painted or burned the design on the shield with pious prayer and ceremony.

Among the Cheyennes, a society known as the Red Shields or the Buffalo Soldiers made many of the war shields. The war society's shields proved particularly powerful, and the mightiest warriors desired them. The society's members were among the tribe's fiercest fighters. They all carried bright red shields rimmed with dark raven feathers that fluttered in the wind. Buffalo heads adorned some of the shields; buffalo tails hung from the middle of others. All were powerful. Legend has it that the original design for the shields came from the tribe's elusive prophet Sweet Water, who also brought them their sacred medicine arrows.

With their red shields gleaming collectively in the sunlight, the society made

a formidable sight and sent many an enemy warrior scurrying away in fright. Cheyennes and their enemies alike believed that when the Buffalo Soldiers swung their shields in a circle in battle they would be impervious to enemy arrows and bullets.

Other Plains Indian societies carried shields which were all decorated alike, but they were not war shields. They were shields for healing, prophecy, dancing, and religious ceremonies.

All Indian shields were made of buffalo hide. For war shields, the Indians began with a forty-inch square of hide from the bull's big hump and used several methods to shrink and toughen it. Normally they staked the hide over a fire on top of a pile of rocks in a pit. They periodically lifted one side of the hide and gently poured water over the rocks to make steam. The process continued for days until the hide had shrunk to about half its original size and doubled in thickness, about half an inch at its thickest point.

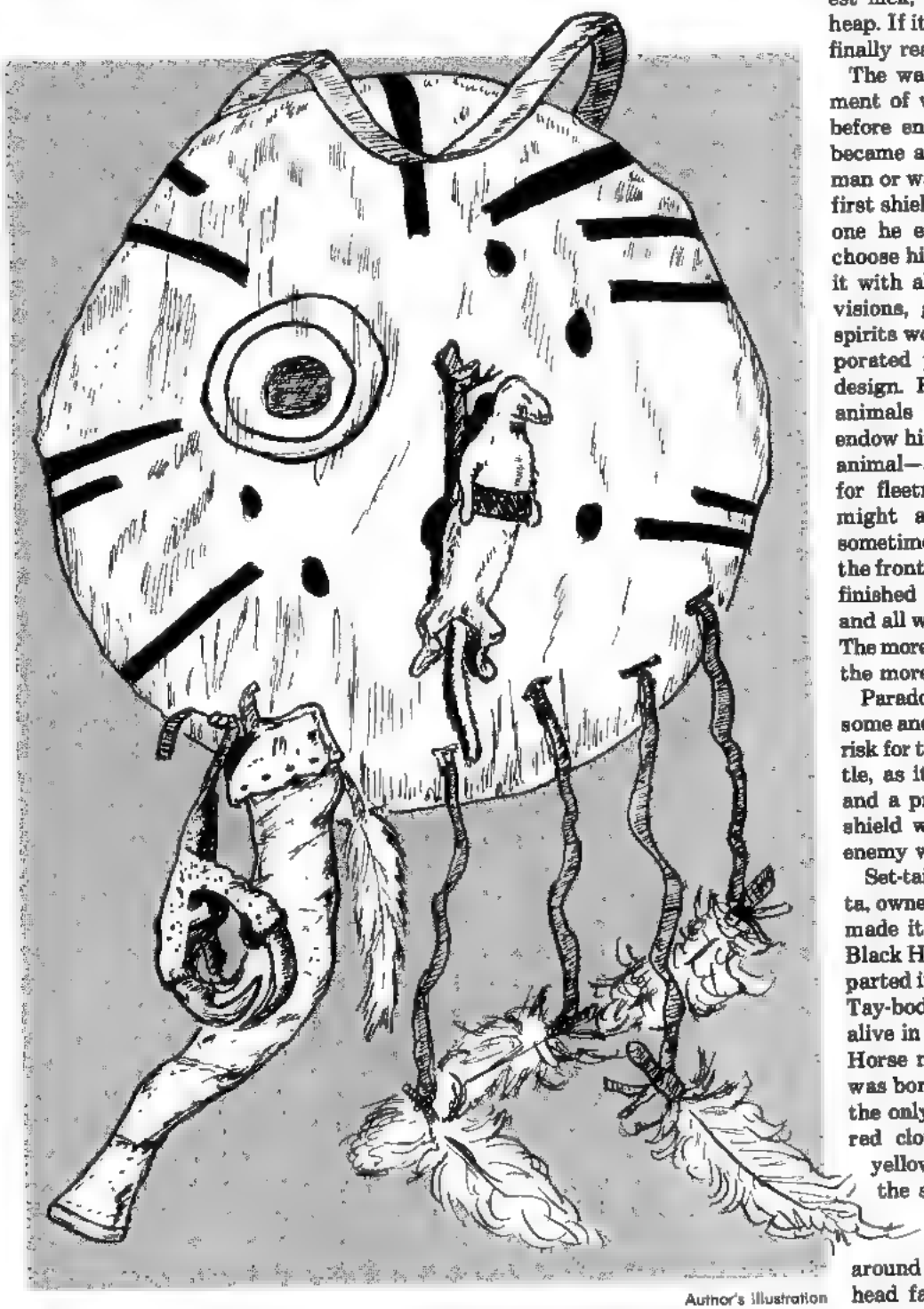
Then they removed the hair and staked the hide over a mound of hot earth to give it a slightly concave shape. After the hide had hardened over the mound, they outlined its final size and shape on it with charcoal. Then they cut along the line and pounded the shield smooth with a rock.

The shield's maker attached a buckskin loop for hanging the shield near the top of the hide. Then he ran a soft buckskin shoulder strap through two holes punched in the hide. Next he hung the shield on a tree and shot arrows at it. If the shield showed even the slightest nick, it was thrown on the scrap heap. If it withstood the arrows, it was finally ready for painting.

The war shield was the last instrument of war that a young man made before entering adulthood. Unless he became a great warrior or a medicine man or was blessed with prophecy, his first shield probably would be the only one he ever made. Thus, he had to choose his design carefully and endow it with all the power that his mystic visions, guardian spirits, and nature spirits would allow. To do so, he incorporated parts of his visions into its design. He drew animals or parts of animals on the shield, which would endow him with characteristics of that animal—a bear paw for strength, a bird for fleetness, a fox for cunning. He might attach parts of animals or sometimes a whole animal, stuffed, to the front of his shield for all to see. The finished shield read like a pictograph, and all who saw it could understand it. The more powerful the shield's meaning, the more powerful the warrior.

Paradoxically, an exceptionally handsome and powerful shield was an added risk for the warrior who carried it in battle, as it made him more conspicuous and a prize coup. If captured, such a shield would be a grand prize for an enemy warrior.

Set-tain-te, known to whites as Satanta, owned such a shield, but he had not made it. The powerful Kiowa warrior Black Horse had constructed it and imparted its powerful magic in the 1830s. Tay-bodal, an old Kiowa warrior still alive in the 1890s described it. "Black Horse made that shield long before I was born. He made six, but that one is the only one left now. It had strips of red cloth fastened on one side and yellow on the other. In the center of the shield was painted a sun, with two rings around it just like the rings you see sometimes around the moon. There was a crane's head fastened to it, and when Black Horse went to war, carrying the shield,



Author's illustration

Comache war shield with "compass" lines.

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he had in his hair the longest wing feathers of the crane. He wore a buckskin shirt painted red on one side and yellow on the other. In camp he kept the shield on a tripod about two hundred paces from his lodge. Above it, tied to a pole, was the crane's wing. . . .

"Black Horse was an old man when he was killed in the fight with the Sah-kee-bo. But before he went into that battle, he gave his shield to Satanta, who was then a young war chief. That shield has been in fights with every kind of red man, and has been many times on long raids deep into Old Mexico. . . .

"I was along on a raid myself when Satanta, carrying his red and yellow shield, killed a Mexican with a spear near Chihuahua. Again I was there when he killed a Sah-kee-bo on the other side of the Arkansas and a Pawnee near Bent's Fort on the Arkansas. I know that Stumbling Bear saw him kill a Ute with a spear, one night in New Mexico. He had that shield in every one of those fights. It had a strong road. It has been in more than one hundred battles. It had the honor of being hung in the medicine lodge during the sun dance."

Satank, the grizzled old war chief of the Kiowas, owned a war shield so potent that the tribe feared its great power would turn against them if they did not care for it constantly on the way to a raid or battle. Fearful of the power he had created in his own shield, Satank often took one of his wives along on a raid or to a battle, just so she could take proper care of the shield.

Author's Illustration

Crow shield cover.

placed it at the rear, or north side, of the tepee. The mighty shield hung there as a silent protector, guarding its owner's back against attack from enemies and evil spirits.

The tripod of thin stout poles lashed together with buffalo thongs stood from five to ten feet tall. The shield dangled from the lashed apex, held above the reach of earthly contamination that might weaken its powers. Some tribes referred to this as "sunning the shield," for they believed that on sunny days the shield "stole," or absorbed, the power of the sun, adding to its own power. On rainy days or in bad weather the shield hung in an honored place inside the tepee.

When the warrior carried his shield,

Satank owned a war shield so potent that the tribe feared its great power would turn against them if they did not care for it constantly on the way to a raid or battle. Fearful of the power he had created in his own shield, Satank often took one of his wives along, just so she could take proper care of the shield.

WIVES commonly accompanied warriors to a battle or raid to care for war shields, but their husbands allowed the practice reluctantly for it often created marital strife—jealousy among the wives, who felt that only the favorite wife was chosen for the task.

Regardless of their strength, all war shields were sacred and, therefore, were covered most of the time. A cover, or sometimes two covers, fit drawstring fashion over the shield. Almost as much prayer and ceremony went into making and decorating the covers as went into making the shields. The covers, too, had to be painted and decorated by a medicine man or an esteemed warrior, who incorporated the designs and decorations of the shield onto the covers. The cover design was never the same as the shield but was often very similar.

Warriors frequently carried their shield covers to battle but always removed them before the actual fighting. Except in an emergency, a warrior removed the cover only after offering the shield to the spirits of the Four Winds by holding it parallel to the ground and raising it slightly in turn to the north, east, south, and west.

Cloth streamers or buffalo-hide thongs with rows of feathers or human scalp locks adorned most shields. Often four feet long, the streamers were not mere decorations but a form of camouflage. When shaken by the warrior or the motion of a running horse, the fluttering, glistening streamers confused the enemy, hopefully causing him to miss his aim.

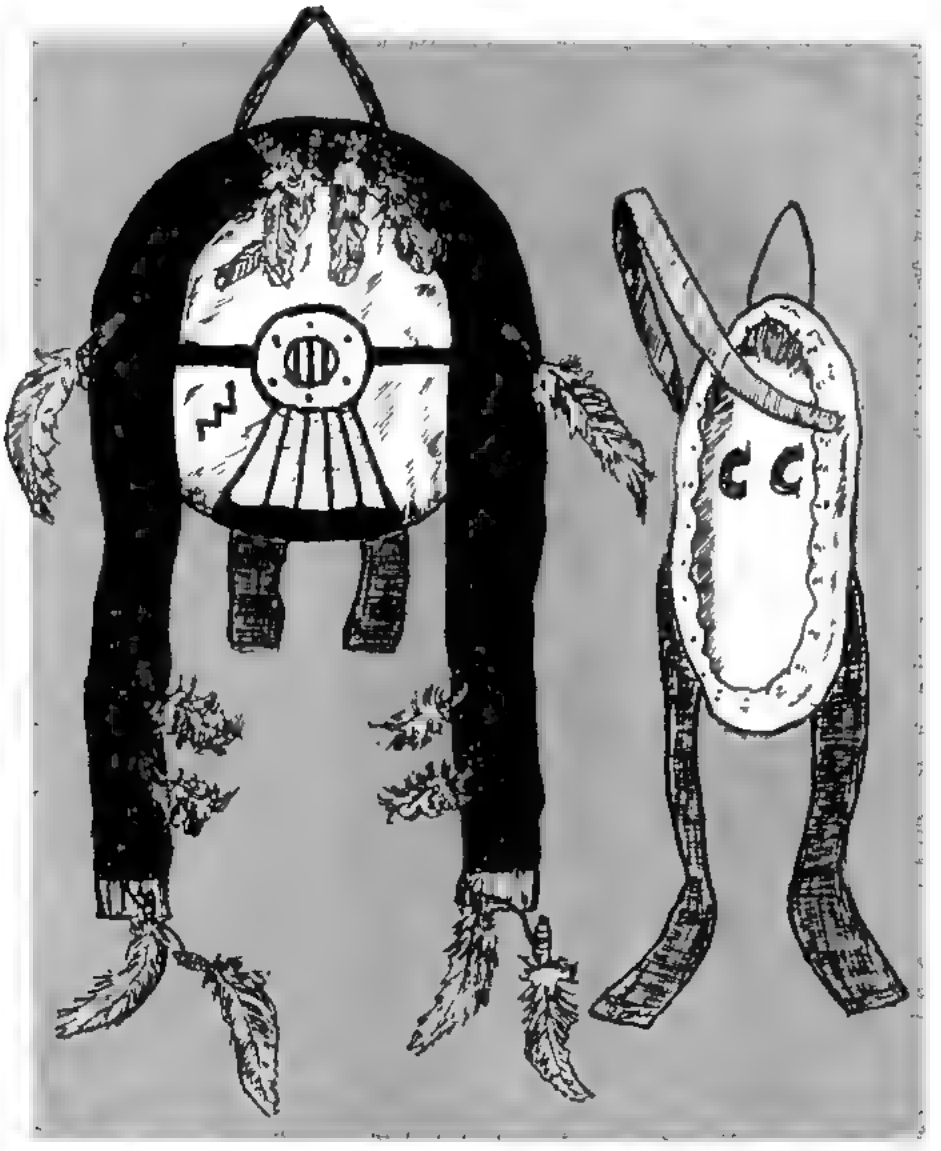
A warrior tucked his beautiful feathered or scalp-lock-decorated streamers into the shallow, concave back side of the shield. Thus packed, the entire shield—streamers, feathers, scalp locks and all—was slipped into its cover. It made a compact pack that could be easily maneuvered and carried.

Under peaceful conditions, the women in the warrior's family usually carried the shield. That honor ordinarily fell to the first or favorite wife, although sometimes the wives shared it, each taking her turn. While traveling, the wife hung the shield by its shoulder straps from the cantle or saddle horn of her riding horse. Unless it was particularly powerful, a shield was never trusted to a riderless pack horse. When making camp, the woman or women tending the shield constructed a special tripod and he normally hung the loop around his neck so the shield rested against his back. He knotted the loop in front to pull the shield snug against his back and prevent it from rubbing or bumping him. An improperly worn shield could result in painful chafing or even open wounds. The quiver full of arrows was carried horizontally underneath or below the shield.

When not carrying it on his back, a mounted warrior often slung his shield on his cantle to the left side of the horse. He knotted the loop to pull the shield snugly to the horse. Sometimes a rider slung his shield from his saddle's pommel, where it rested securely under his knees.

Indians used shields for purposes other than fighting. Many Comanches incorporated straight black lines into their shields' designs. On cloudy days when they could not use the sun to determine their direction, they pointed one of the lines at a distant landmark, thus using the shield as a compass.

Other Indians used their shields to prophesy the outcomes of battles or raids. One of the most famous prophecy shields belonged to the Crow warrior Mountain Wind. At its center was a picture of a man painted in blue. He had large ears and held a straight, red stone pipe in his left hand. Around its rim dangled beautiful eagle feathers that fluttered gracefully in the wind. After



Author's Illustrations

Left: Sioux shield with trade "felt" streamers. Right: Back view of shield.

dancing and singing a song which no one else understood, Mountain Wind would fling the shield upon the ground. Then, gazing down upon the shield, he read aloud the shield's predictions. Its accuracy was uncanny, predicting not only the outcome of battles but also the warriors to be lost by both sides. It became so powerful among the Crow that they rarely entered battle without its favorable prediction.

The Kiowas, Sioux, Southern Cheyennes, Kiowa-Apaches, and Comanches also had prophecy shields. Most of them were rolled on edge like a wheel and their predictions read by the way they landed. Those shields, too, were amazingly accurate in their predictions.

To lose one's shield was to break the ultimate taboo. Certain unavoidable losses of the shield, such as while crossing a river or during a storm or by a woman caring for the shield, were normally forgiven. But if a warrior lost his shield to an enemy or through cowardice, he suffered the wrath of the whole tribe. He lost his standing and was often treated as a "nothing," unrecognized by anyone except, perhaps, his closest family.

TRIBES INFLICTED that punishment regardless of the warrior's age. An-Zah-ste, who had been a celebrated warrior all his life, was an old man when he lost his shield in 1833. He was guarding a camp of women with a few other old men while the younger men were hunting. Early one morning a band of screaming Osages burst into the camp. They pounced unmercifully on their victims, deftly cutting their throats. The horror was too much for old An-Zah-ste, and he ran for his life, leaving his shield behind.

An-Zah-ste was disgraced, never again to be recognized by his tribesmen. It was a sad ending for a man who had brought so much war honor to his people.

The Kiowa, Iseeo, was barely nineteen years old when he lost his shield, but his story turned out quite differently than An-Zah-ste's. Iseeo was a war chief and a member of the famed On-de, a group of warriors who had attained their status through war rather than by birth.

Iseeo joined a band of Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes raiding deep into Mexico in late fall, 1853. They had ridden for days, and just as they entered the "no water" lands they chanced upon a troop of Mexican lancers which they successfully engaged. Spurred by the victory, they proceeded until they came on a herd of horses pasturing on the outskirts of a Mexican pueblo.

Only two peons guarded the herd. Iseeo and Big Horse rode up and shot the two herders as the rest of the Indians gathered the horses into a nearby corral. Most of the Indians favored moving north with the captured herd before the garrison at the nearby pueblo became aware of their presence, but not Iseeo. He wanted to enter the town and stir up some trouble. Au-an-todal and Hone-zeptai said they would join him. As the rest of the band started the herd north, Iseeo and his young friends rode for the town.

It was dark now, and they could hear soft music coming from the village plaza as they approached. A high adobe wall enclosed the village and the Indians dismounted and tied their horses in some nearby bushes. Gracefully they scaled the high wall and dropped inside. There they sat down to rest with their backs to the wall. Iseeo removed his shield to make himself more comfortable. Fatigued by the long day and lulled by the warm night and soft music, the trio drifted into sleep.

Suddenly a sentry was on the wall above them, shouting and firing his gun. The three Indians jumped up and scurried like frightened squirrels over the wall. They hit the ground and ran, bullets splatting the ground around them. With no time to stop for the horses, they struck the open prairie at a dead run, the Mexicans on horseback not far behind.

"My shield," Iseeo screamed. "I forgot my shield!" He turned to start back for it, but his companions grabbed him. Fighting, they dragged him with them. It would be too dangerous for all of them to let him go back.

When they were reunited, the rest of the band missed Iseeo's shield. "He lost it in the dark when his horse threw him," Au-an-todal lied, feeling cowardly

about not letting Iseeo return for his shield. The lie gnawed at Iseeo until at last, just before they reached his village, he burst out in anguish, "I've disgraced myself. I left my shield! I ran from the enemy! Ai-ee! Ai-ee!"

Iseeo's people renounced him as a war chief and an On-de. He became a "nothing," shunned by all but his father. For a year he was so ashamed that he finally refused to come out of his tepee. In a desperate attempt to help Iseeo, his father went to see a powerful medicine man, who gave him a rabbit-skin cap topped with a pure white eagle feather. Iseeo was to wear it into the next battle, for it would bring him much bravery.

The unwelcome Iseeo accompanied a group of warriors into Mexico. There they came on a group of Mexican soldiers with a brass cannon drawn by mules. Upon spying the Indians, the Mexicans dismounted and took refuge in a sheltered hollow along a stream. The Indians dismounted and began firing from the cover of a nearby gully.

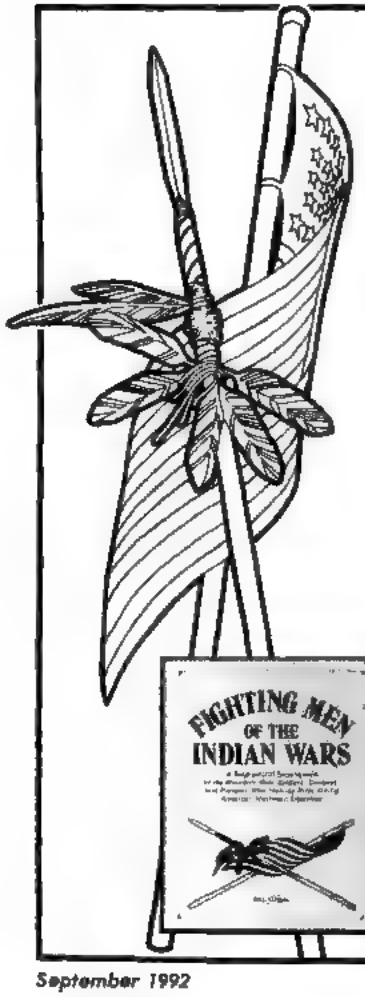
Firing was becoming general when Iseeo rode up on his white war horse. In his hand he held his polished spear, for as a nothing he was allowed no other weapon. On his back he bore his empty quiver. At full speed he galloped toward the enemy. Their bullets spat about him, but he circled boldly out across their front and returned unhurt to the sheltering gully. Immediately he repeated the performance, this time at a canter. Slowing to a trot he rode out a third time, coming daringly close to the enemy.

THAT FEAT of bravery was too much for the mighty Dohausan, chief of all the Kiowas. He rode forth and circled even closer to the enemy. Then, hesitating, he looked back to see if any other dared challenge his feat. Iseeo burst forth, his beating heel urging his horse forward, straight into the midst of the astonished Mexicans. Fired by his courage, the other Indians charged behind him.

Cannonballs exploded in their midst, but still the Indians came. The Mexican commander stood to face the charge as Iseeo's lance pierced him through. A gun exploded in Iseeo's face. A Mexican ball thudded into his knee. Barely conscious, Iseeo slipped from his horse. He could not see, but hands reached out for him. He felt the breath of his friends as they blew and licked away at the black powder grains embedded in his eyes. It was too late. Iseeo was blind.

Victoriously, they carried Iseeo home. Friends and relatives cared for him in a special tent. Tribesmen once again declared him a war chief and an On-de. Then, though he would never use it, they ceremoniously presented the smiling, blind warrior with a special war shield full of great power. He had regained the honor and respect of his tribe, but within a few weeks he lay dead, a victim of blood poisoning in his injured knee. The new war shield, resting on his chest, was buried with him.

Although shields could be passed from father to son or given to another, most were buried in the ground or left to weather away on burial scaffolding. Today, few of those amazing shields remain.



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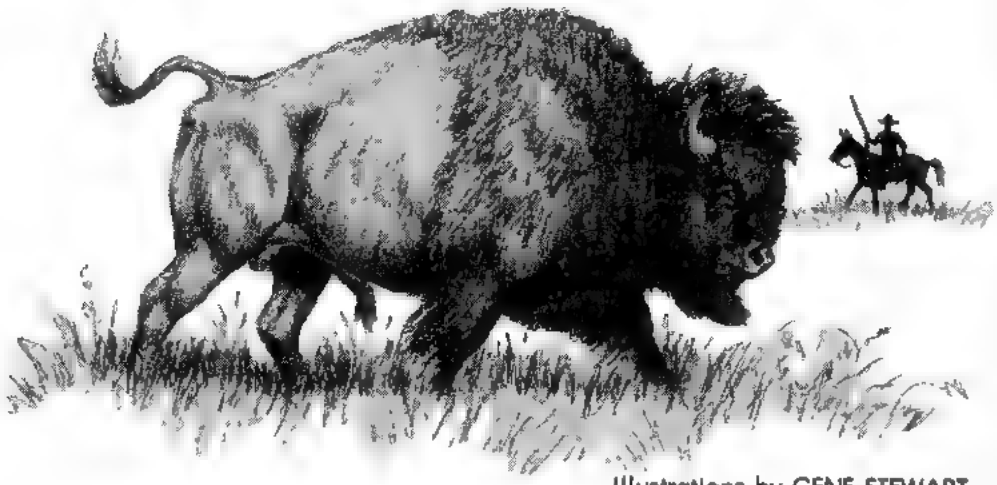
Zeke Williams & the Quest for Santa Fe

By MICHAEL W. JERRELLS



Illustrations by GENE STEWART

On September 1, 1813, Ezekiel Williams arrived at Cooper's Fort on the Missouri River and saw civilization for the first time in four years. Cooper's Fort was not much, as far as civilization went, but for Williams it was good enough.

Four years was a long time, but it had seemed like only four months to Zeke Williams. During that time he experienced more adventure than most people would see in a lifetime—mornings up to his knees in cold water checking traps and nights swapping stories around the campfire or standing picket duty to guard the horses against marauding Indians. He had hunted buffalo on the prairies and floated down broad rivers seeing no one for days and weeks on end.

Although he was not called by such a name, Williams was a mountain man, one of that special breed who helped tame the West. Born and raised in Kentucky, he was already a seasoned frontiersman by the time he began his western odyssey.

Sometime during or before 1807, Zeke Williams turned up at St. Louis looking to make his way in the fur trade. By that spring, he had worked out an arrangement with trader Manuel Lisa, who was leading the first American trapping outfit up the Missouri River to the mountains. Working as a free agent, Williams could trap where he wanted and when he wanted but sold his furs to Lisa; he was what later would be called a free trapper.

Instead of traveling upriver with Lisa, Williams left St. Louis among a party of horsemen. They followed the Missouri through country claimed by Omahas, Otoes, Arikaras, Mandans, and other tribes, but were lucky and had no trouble. After Williams' and Lisa's groups met near the mouth of the Yellowstone as planned, they traveled together up the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Bighorn River. On a point of land between the two rivers Lisa erected Fort Raymond that fall. The post was completed in time for the beaver hunt.

Williams took up his traps and began the vocation which he would follow for the next six years. He and the rest of Lisa's men trapped the Bighorn country and the Three Forks of the Missouri River with great success during the fall of 1807 and the spring of 1808. Early in the summer of 1808 Lisa made ready to return to civilization to sell his furs. By November he and Williams were in St. Louis. Soon after, Williams went to Kentucky but was back in St. Louis with his eleven-year-old son, Samuel, by early spring 1809. Williams, a widower of many years, left Samuel with friends.

Joining Manuel Lisa's new St. Louis, Missouri, Fur Co. expedition upriver, Williams left St. Louis on May 17, 1809, again among a party of horsemen. The trip upriver was as uneventful as before. Williams spent much of his time hunting game far out on the plains, supplying meat to the men traveling upriver in barges and keelboats.

On September 22, ten miles above the mouth of Knife River, both parties stopped. On the south bank of the river Lisa erected Fort Mandan as a jumping off point for overland trapping expeditions. Fort Mandan also would help Lisa secure trade with the Mandan and Minnetaree Indians. During the fall and spring hunts of 1809–10, Williams used the fort as his base, trapping the country around the Knife and Little Missouri rivers. Being one of the many free agents, he could get better prices for his furs, because his traps and outfit belonged to him and were not credited to the company. Lisa had no intentions of allowing Williams to sell furs to the competition, so he was willing to pay more for those furs than for those of his own men.

The visionary Lisa for years had been privately trying to open trade with the Spanish of New Mexico. For the most part, his attempts failed. Not one to give up easily, in 1808 he had sent his trusted lieutenant Jean Baptiste Champlain south with an outfit of trade goods. Lisa instructed Champlain to trade with the Arapaho Indians, who were known to range in the country claimed by the Spanish. The next year Champlain made another journey south with time, perhaps, for a third. While trading with the Arapahos went well, Champlain could not locate any Spanish subjects with whom to discuss opening trade. He did learn, however, that the Spaniards made a yearly trip north to trade with the Arapahos and the Pawnees.

In the summer of 1810 Lisa decided to try again. Leading twenty men, including Williams and one named Porteau, Champlain headed south from Fort Mandan. The party consisted almost entirely of free men; their only obligations, if any, were to Lisa himself. Williams, Champlain, and the others trailed south along the Little Missouri River, then crossed the Belle Fourche, keeping west of the Black Hills. They crossed the North Platte, and continued southward, staying east of the Laramie Mountains and later the Front Range of the Rockies. After forty or fifty days, they reached the Arkansas River, which at the time was the boundary beween Spanish America and the United States.

They arrived around the first week of

October, just in time to begin the fall beaver hunt. Breaking into small parties, the men spent fall, 1810, trapping the Arkansas and its tributaries. The area was occupied not only by the Arapahos but also the Cheyennes, Comanches, and Kiowas, as well as the Utes in the mountains to the west—none of whom would have been friendly to a lone white man checking his traps. Amazingly, the Indians left them alone.

Trapping up the Arkansas, the Champlain party wintered on or near the river. The spring of 1811, they again broke into smaller groups to trap. Then Williams and the others got their first taste of what they had missed the previous fall—trouble. Indians began to rob and harass the trappers wherever they found them.

In June 1811 at the junction of the Sweetwater and North Platte rivers, Champlain's trappers rendezvoused and immediately went into council to consider their plight. They agreed to divide the party in half. Ten crossed the mountains to the west; ten went southward along the base of the mountains toward the Arkansas. Jean Baptiste Champlain, Ezekiel Williams, and Porteau returned to the Arkansas with the southbound group, doubtless to the rich beaver country they had left the previous fall. They may also have intended to try again to locate the Spaniards and carry out Lisa's plans.

They spent the summer of 1811 traveling south along the eastern base of the front range. Crossing the Arkansas, Williams and Champlain ran into some Arapahos who told them that the fort on the Missouri had gone under. The Arapahos said Lisa had fallen out with the surrounding tribes and they were killing off one another as fast as they could. The only part of the story with even a grain of truth was that one of Lisa's forts had gone under; however, it was not Fort Mandan on the Missouri but Fort Raymond on the Bighorn. Convinced their main base of operations was gone, Champlain and Williams believed they were cut off and could not return to the Missouri.

The men held another council. Four of the ten elected to try to find the Spanish settlements. That left six—Champlain, his two employees, two other Frenchmen, and Williams. October 1 found

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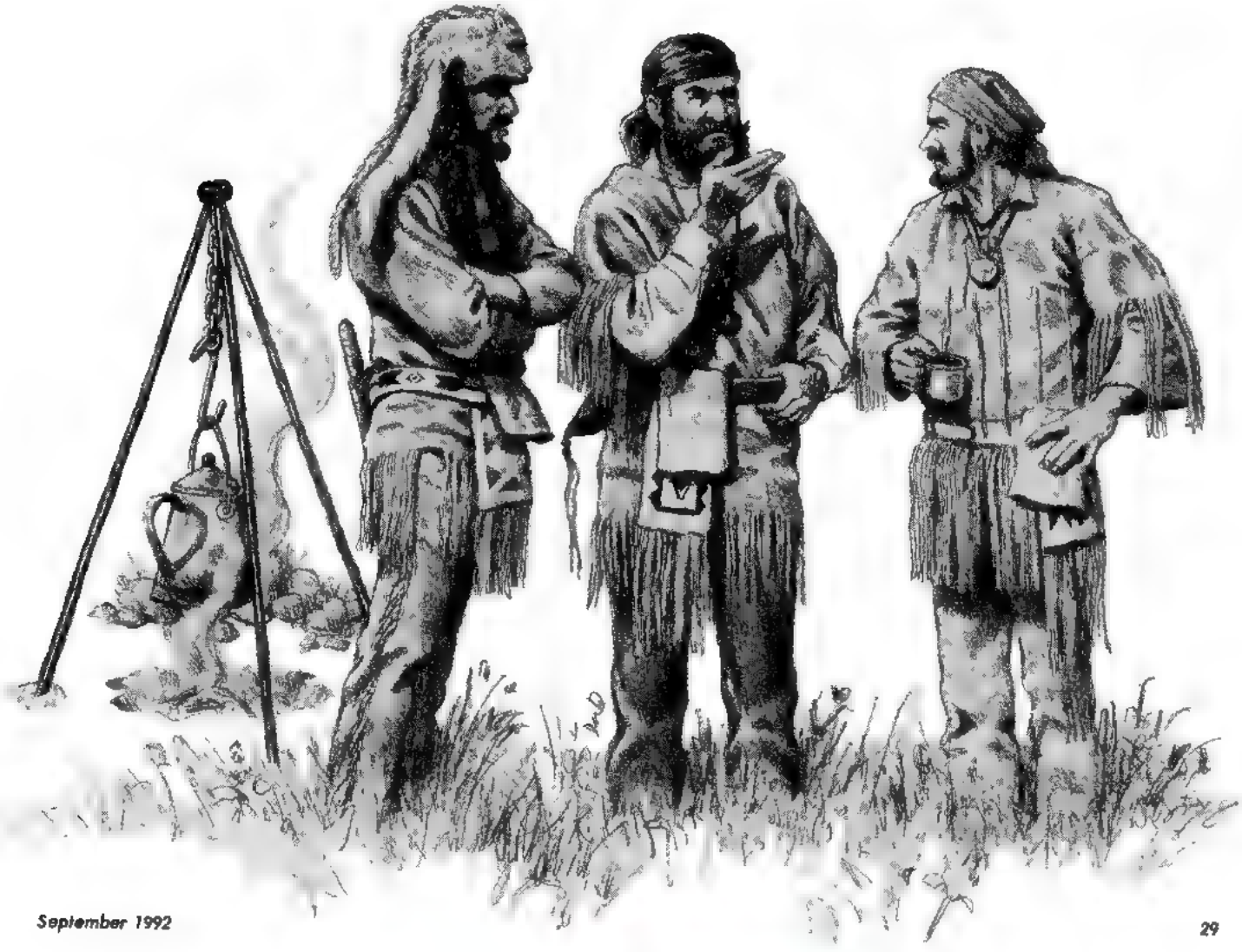

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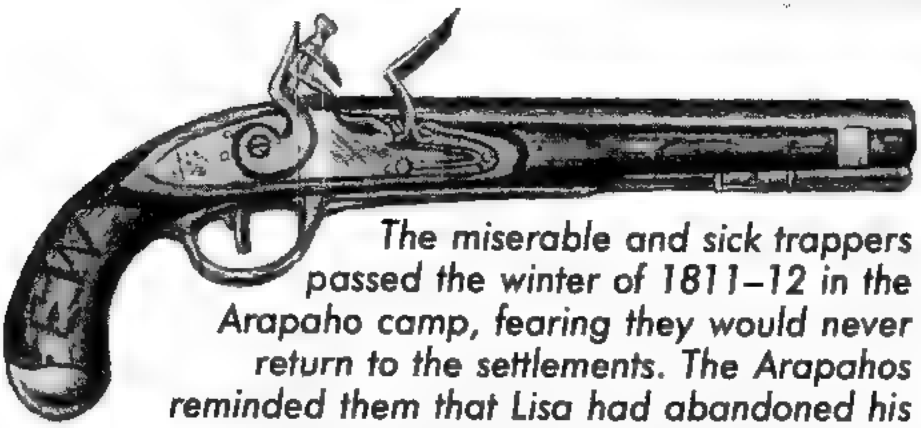

The miserable and sick trappers passed the winter of 1811–12 in the Arapaho camp, fearing they would never return to the settlements. The Arapahos reminded them that Lisa had abandoned his fort and advised against going north.

that group undaunted, setting traps near the headwaters of the Arkansas River in a mountain park. Trying to avoid further troubles with the Indians, the six men stayed no more than a few miles apart while they trapped.

On November 1, Champlain and Williams found three of their companions dead, their horses and outfits stolen. Fearing for their lives, Champlain, Williams, and Porteau headed south for the Arkansas, where they sought protection among the Arapahos. To their horror, the three men recognized the horses and equipment of their dead companions among the Arapahos. The head chief of the camp told the three men that the only way of saving themselves was to stay with him, which they did.

The miserable and sick trappers passed the winter of 1811–12 in the Arapaho camp, fearing they would never return to the settlements. The Arapahos reminded them that Lisa had abandoned his fort and advised against going north. Champlain and Porteau wanted to stay with the Arapahos until some white trader found them, but Williams had had enough. He did not trust the Arapahos and decided to leave, even if it cost him his life. Learning from the Arapahos that the Arkansas flowed eastward to the country of the Osage Indians, Williams decided to follow that route back to civilization. Champlain and Porteau helped him make a dugout canoe, and he cached the furs taken during his two years in the mountains.

After an emotional parting, Williams set out down the Arkansas on March 1, 1812. Champlain told Williams that he and Porteau planned to go north toward the Missouri, where they doubtless hoped to find someone from the Missouri Fur Company who could help them find Lisa or get back to St. Louis.

Williams would never see his two companions again. Reports indicate they were killed by Indians in camp high up the Arkansas during the summer of 1812. While their killers were never definitely known, signs indicate the Indians were the Gros Ventres or Atsina cousins of the Arapahos, but they could just as easily have been the Arapahos. Whoever they were, they made off with all of Champlain's horses and furs, and Lisa's hopes of entering the Spanish trade died with Champlain. Williams did not hear of his companions' fate until a year and a half later.

Williams traveled four hundred miles downriver, trapping as he went. At the junction of Fountain Creek and the Arkansas, low water halted his progress. Caching the furs he had collected on the Arkansas, Williams reportedly met a Spaniard who filled him in on the trade in New Mexico. Having finally accomplished what he, Champlain, and the others had set out to do, Williams must have been elated.

According to one source, Williams traveled into New Mexico but did not go all the way to Santa Fe. He likely stayed in one of the outlying villages, hoping to avoid trouble with Spanish officials. He stayed in New Mexico from the summer of 1812 to the spring of 1813, when he set out northward for the Arkansas. He now knew firsthand how the Spaniards lived and traded.

On June 1 he was back at the mouth of Fountain Creek, where he raised his cache of furs and continued downriver. On June 23, near the great bend of the Arkansas in what is now central Kansas, Kansa Indians captured him, bound him hand and foot, and seized his furs and traps.

A party of whites and Osages hunting in the area heard of the incident and sent Daniel Larrison and Joseph Larivee (both former employees of Lisa's Missouri Fur Company) to demand Williams' release. The Kansas refused to turn over their prisoner. Around August 1, the Kansas left the Arkansas and traveled north to their permanent villages. At their camp they released Williams, gave back some of his furs, and sent him home under escort. September 1, 1813, he finally arrived at Cooper's Fort.

Williams could hardly believe he was back on the Missouri frontier. He had once believed he would never make it. Still, many things remained undone. First he intended to get back the rest of his furs from the Kansa Indians. He also still had the valuable cache of furs high up the Arkansas near the Arapaho camp.

In November Williams was at Arrowrock on the Missouri across from Cooper's Fort when the Kansas had come in for their government annuities. Indian agent George Sibley demanded that the Kansas return Williams' furs to him. Sibley threatened to withhold their annuities unless they complied. Grudgingly they returned all the furs except one pack, which could not be found.

IN DECEMBER, Williams went to St. Louis, where he told Manuel Lisa all that had happened to Champlain's party since it had left Fort Mandan in August 1810. Lisa no doubt was overjoyed that Williams had reached New Mexico and seen firsthand the trade situation there. On the other hand, Lisa informed Williams that Champlain and Porteau had not come in; if they had tried to return north from the Arkansas to Fort Mandan, they were unquestionably dead.

During the winter of 1814, Williams married Nancy Jones, a widow with six children. He also served in the Missouri Rangers, a group of men raised to guard the frontier against Indian attack through the War of 1812.

On May 16, Williams set out again for the West with Braxton Cooper and with Joseph Philibert's company of trappers. Williams wanted to recover his cache of furs from Arapaho country. At the Arapaho village that summer, he wasted no time asking the whereabouts of Champlain and Porteau. When the Arapahos' answers did not satisfy him, he called a council of the chiefs, demanding to know what had happened to his friends. Pressured, the Arapahos told him that Champlain and Porteau had started north with a packtrain. Two Arapaho hunting parties last saw them. The Arapahos told him that Crow Indians had found two white men dead in a camp and believed the victims to be Champlain and Porteau. At that, Williams gave up the search for his two companions.

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In July, Williams raised his cache of furs and loaded them in canoes. With Braxton Cooper, Francois LeClerc, and a man named May, he set out down the Arkansas. He planned to sell the furs at the Arkansas Post; a fort far down the Arkansas near its junction with the Mississippi. Five hundred miles downstream, low water forced Williams and his companions to stop. Caching the furs once again, Williams and the others returned home to await the Arkansas' spring rise.

During the winter of 1814–15, Williams received word that LeClerc—whom he had hired from Philibert's Company—had revealed to others the whereabouts of the cache. A group had banded together, and LeClerc was to guide them to the furs, which they planned to plunder before Williams could recover them. The alarmed Williams left the Boon's Lick country with William and Joseph Cooper and reached his cache to find it intact. The three men set up camp to await LeClerc and his thieves, but they never arrived. Williams later learned LeClerc's plan had fallen through. Deciding it was nonsense to return home, Williams stayed the winter on the Arkansas.

In March the river rose enough to permit boat travel. Williams loaded his canoes and, with the two Coopers, floated his furs downstream to the Arkansas Post. There he sold them for a good profit. Now that he had finally sold the last of the furs, Williams could return home and enjoy a normal life—or so he told himself.

When he returned home to Boon's Lick during midsummer of 1815, he found he was the subject of slanderous rumors. One rumor had it that he and the Coopers had plundered a cache belonging to others and had taken the furs to Arkansas Post to avoid prosecution. Another was printed in the Kaskaskia, Illinois, *Western Intelligencer* on July 9, 1816. It claimed that Williams had murdered Champlain and stolen his furs. The article so angered Williams that on August 17, he wrote a long letter to Joseph Charless, editor of the *Missouri Gazette*, which was published September 14. Williams recounted the facts of his odyssey from 1810 to 1813. Williams was never charged with any crime, and his accuser remained anonymous.

After that, Williams' life finally followed a normal course, which he probably welcomed after the years of struggle and mortal danger. But the West had not seen the last of Ezekiel Williams. In the spring of 1827, he led a trading caravan overland to Santa Fe, returning in the fall with 800 horses and mules valued at $28,000. His trip into New Mexico years before obviously had given him invaluable knowledge of the Spanish trade.

If anyone had a right to boast of his accomplishments, Zeke Williams did. He was a member of Manuel Lisa's first fur-trading expedition up the Missouri and was one of the first Americans to trap the upper Arkansas and the mountains of central Colorado. Few men could have had Zeke Williams' knowledge of the country from the Missouri to the Arkansas. But Zeke Williams was not a boastful man, so much of what he knew was probably lost—to the misfortune, no doubt, of those who followed.

From Billy JOHN

Author's Collection

John William Poe's dull, muscle-bound appearance belied a shrewdness which turned him from a buffalo hunter and vigilante into a banker and state leader.

Every so often, the West produced an original character, one who tried just about every vocation the frontier had to offer before finally becoming successful in a most unfrontier-like manner. One such character was John William Poe, who backed up Pat Garrett the night Garrett killed Billy the Kid. Buffalo hunter, lawman, stock detective, and sometime vigilante, Poe ended his days as a banker, financier, and state leader. Like many of his time, he represented both the good and the bad of the West, although in his case the good substantially outweighed the bad.

Nothing in Poe's physical features or early life indicated that he would ever be more than just another drifter. He was a big man, built like a modern linebacker, with large bones, heavy chest and shoulders, square jaw, and almost no neck. His photos from that time generally show an expressionless face. His actions seemed almost calculated to appear slow, aimless, and devoid of imagination. But beneath that dull appearance was a shrewd, careful mind. Poe was something of an intellectual, even a romantic. Those qualities, along with his stable marriage, made him a success.

BORN IN Kentucky in 1850, Poe grew up on a farm operated by his father and grandfather. He told his wife that Sir Walter Scott's novels inspired him to go west in search of adventure. When he was seventeen he and two friends left for St. Louis, then the jumping-off place for the West. They had covered forty miles when a concerned tavern keeper convinced them to return home. Back on the farm, he chafed under the routine of work and his grandfather's plans to send him to college. He ran away again in the spring of 1870; although it was another false start, he was gone for a year before he returned home. Back on the farm, he heard of the fortune to be made in buffalo hunting and finally left for good.

By the time Poe arrived on the frontier, the northern herds of buffalo had been hunted out, and the great hunt had moved into west-central Texas. Poe arrived at Fort Griffin, a rough-and-tumble town with an adjacent military post, which was ideally situated near the buffalo ranges. There he met Joe McCombs, who at twenty was already a veteran of the Texas frontier. On Christmas Day, 1874, McCombs led the first of hundreds of hunts organized out

"Quién es?" Billy demanded. "Who is it?" "Oh, you needn't be afraid," Poe replied, still unaware of the stranger's identity. "We're not going to hurt you." The man backed toward Maxwell's door, gun in one hand, knife in the other. Poe did not want him walking in on Garrett, but there was nothing he could do.

the Kid to Bank President:
WILLIAM POE

By CHARLES M. ROBINSON III

of Fort Griffin. Accompanying him as skinners were John Jacobs and Poe.

"I did all the killing and Poe and Jacobs did the skinning," McCombs recalled. They were on the range for two months and took seven hundred hides back to Griffin. Then McCombs and Poe rode out to a new range beyond the ruins of Fort Phantom Hill, leaving Jacobs to follow in the wagon. McCombs reminisced, "I remember a pretty close call Poe had with a buffalo. I had downed several bulls right together. Poe, being only a short distance away, came over and we approached the kill. When about fifteen feet from a downed bull, up he got and charged straight at Poe; I was behind Poe and shot by him and dropped the bull at his feet, Poe shooting him with his pistol as he fell."

The combined total for the two hunts was two thousand hides. The buyers in Fort Griffin paid $2.00 each for robe hides and $1.50 each for the others. John William Poe decided that was the life for him.

When the McCombs expedition left Fort Griffin, the federal government was engaged in mop-up operations against the southern plains Indians in the Red River War. The close of the war a few months later effectively ended the Indian threat in north Texas, and hunters flooded into the Griffin area to take advantage of the large, accessible buffalo herds. Among them was a tall, rangy man named Pat Garrett. Although nothing indicates that Garrett and Poe met during that time, they later became friends and joined forces against one of the West's most vicious outlaws.

Meanwhile, Poe hunted the area between Fort Griffin and Fort Concho. Armed with a heavy Sharps rifle, he worked well ahead of most other hunters, pushing to the edge of the range. Although he was successful, by 1878 the Texas herds had effectively been exterminated, and like many hunters, Poe found himself unemployed. His wife, Sophie, later wrote that he and John Jacobs used their hide money to establish a sheep ranch near Albany, some fourteen miles south of Fort Griffin. The evidence, however, shows that Poe was actually in debt. His creditors apparently included the Sharps Rifle Company, since, in answer to an inquiry from Sharps, Fort Concho outfitter W.S. Veck wrote that Poe "has not made any money this year, as the Buffalo business is played out and He as

Old Jail Art Center and Archive, Albany, Texas

Joe McCombs, shown here in the 1930s, hired Poe as a skinner for the first buffalo hunt out of Fort Griffin on Christmas Day 1874.

Glenn Shirley Photo

John William and Sophie Poe in 1884. Despite her resentment of Lea and Garrett's efforts to arrange her marriage, Sophie was fascinated by Poe and married him anyway.

well as others have lost their occupation." Jacobs went to work in Hank Smith's store in Fort Griffin, while Poe accepted the job of town marshal (not deputy United States marshal as his wife, Sophie, later contended).

Fort Griffin was a wild and woolly town, whose economy was based on buffalo hunters, soldiers, and cowboys. They needed goods and services, and they needed entertainment. The merchants provided the goods and services, while the saloon keepers, gamblers, and fancy ladies provided the entertainment. The town ran day and night, and the noise from the saloons and gambling dens was often punctuated by gunfire. In addition to the usual problems, racial tensions plagued the town, since the fort proper was often garrisoned by black troops and Tonkawa Indians lived near the post where they served the army as scouts. Liquor and racial hatred could be a deadly combination, and occasionally someone ended up getting killed. Other times, however, the situation became ludicrous, as one newspaper account shows:

> Wednesday last a number of Tonkawa Indians were in town and a few of them obtained whiskey. Grant and Cooper became involved in a quarrel when, Indian fashion, Grant drew his knife on Cooper. Several passes were made but nobody hurt when Constable Poe put in an appearance and Mr. Indian "lit out like a quarter horse and the longer he ran the faster he got," so Poe says. They returned soon, however, and John gobbled on Cooper and [cala]boosed him. Soon he found old Charley and served him the same way. After keeping them all night and sobering them up, they were turned loose with a kick and a cuff and admonished to "rack out, dad burn you," for camp and sin no more.

Much of the lawlessness had been quelled by two factors: the Shackelford county vigilance committee and John Larn, the tough, respectable young sheriff. Many members of the committee were honest citizens with families and property to protect and who sincerely believed that established law enforcement could not, or would not, work to protect them. But the committee had its element of thugs as well, and in the mid-1870s Fort Griffin became known as a lynch town. In addition to being a peace officer, John William Poe almost certainly was a member of the committee. In fact, he was listed with the state adjutant general's office in Austin as being one of the "principal men in the Shakelford [sic] Co. Mob," although the Texas Rangers never had enough evidence to prove it.

Another member of the committee was Sheriff Larn. When one means of law enforcement did not work, Larn was perfectly willing to try another, and if he did not actively participate in the lynchings, he at least turned a blind eye. Even so, he was successful, and by the time he resigned, it was said he had done more to clean up Shackelford County than any sheriff before or since. As time passed, however, it became obvious that Larn had a dual personality—a dutiful family man and rancher on the one hand, and a cold-blooded killer and cattle thief on the other. By June 23, 1878, his reputation could no longer protect him, and his successor, Sheriff Bill Cruger, arrested him for attempted murder.

Larn was placed in the county jail in Albany, with Poe and three others

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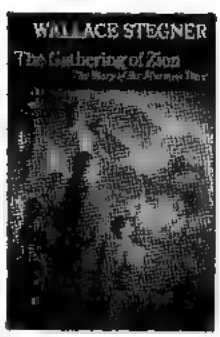

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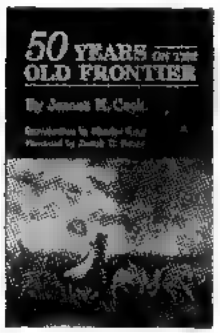

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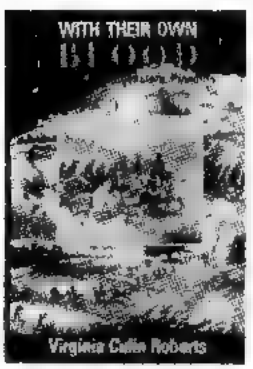

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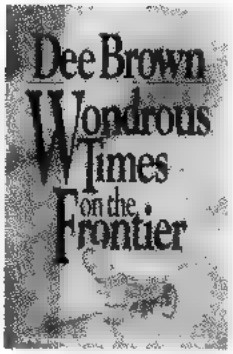

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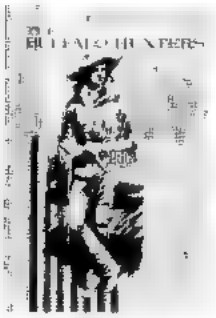

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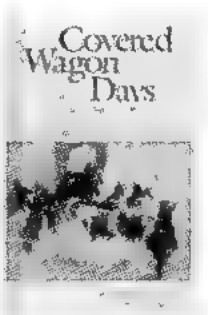

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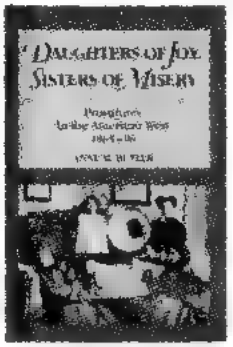

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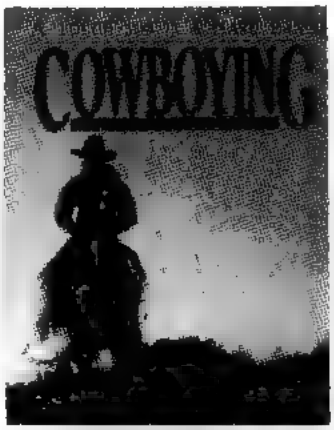

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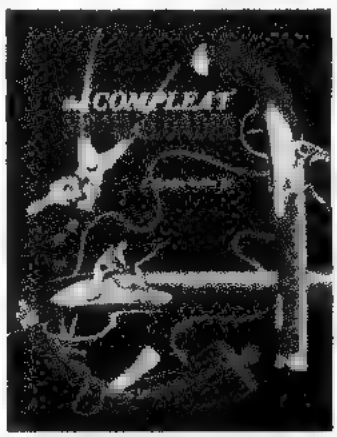

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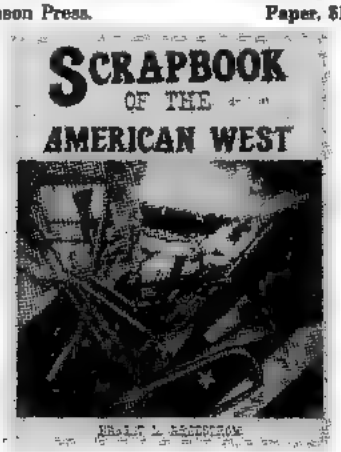

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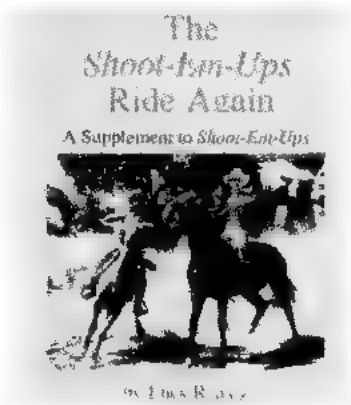

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guarding him. Sometime between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m. the following day, Poe heard footsteps and looked outside to see about thirty-five armed men. He was easily overpowered—all too easily, many think—and the other guards were disarmed. The intruders then opened fire on Larn, hitting him fatally nine times.

The rangers, who had already been investigating the Shackelford County vigilance committee's activities for several months, immediately began looking into Larn's death. A few days after the killing, Ranger Newt Jones ran into Poe. Jones did not trust him, and as they talked, the Ranger kept his finger on his rifle. He said the Rangers intended to stop the killings and were gathering evidence against the committee. "Poe said not a word, but looked at me," Jones recalled more than sixty years later. Eventually, political pressure in Austin brought the removal of the Rangers from Shackelford County, and no one was ever tried in the Larn case.

IF POE had a dark side, he could also be heroic. A year after Larn's death, a flash flood swept down the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, inundating Fort Griffin and drowning several people. At the height of the flood, Poe was trying to help a woman across a low spot between two buildings when the current caught them and swept them down the street. It carried them through town, banging them against buildings and debris. Finally, they hit against a telegraph pole near Government Hill. Poe grabbed hold of the pole and managed to pull the woman out.

Shortly after daylight the next morning, Poe saw lawyer J.W. Wray and his wife stranded in a pecan tree. A bathtub and a table were floating nearby. Together, Wray and Poe placed the bathtub on the upended table to form a makeshift raft. Wray and his wife climbed in while Poe stayed in the water and pushed them to safety. Ironically, Wray had represented John Larn the year before and had been trying to arrange bail the night Larn was killed.

During that period, Poe was reportedly the first member initiated into Fort Griffin Lodge No. 269, A.F. & A.M., after it was chartered in 1878. He remained an active Mason in Texas and New Mexico the rest of his life.

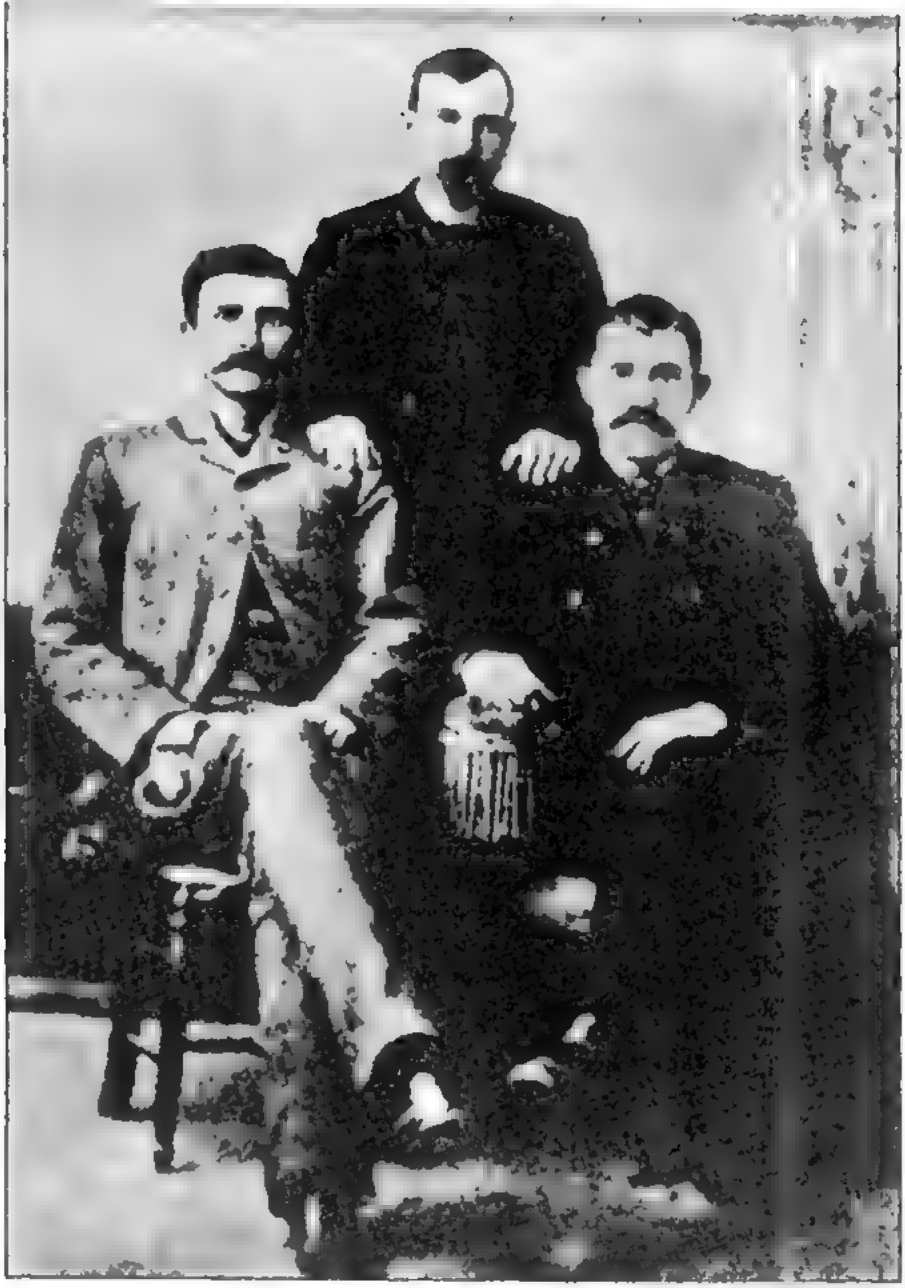
In the fall of 1879, Fort Griffin's economic base obviously was drying up, and Poe moved to Mobeetie in the Texas panhandle, where he became a deputy sheriff. He later told his wife that he ran for sheriff and was defeated by one vote.

Texas State Archive

Tonkawa Charley was one of the Indian scouts whose arrest for drunkenness by Poe was humorously recounted in the Fort Griffin newspaper.

Soon after, an association of cattlemen along the Canadian River offered him a job as stock detective. They were particularly interested in putting an end to New Mexico outlaw Billy the Kid, who slipped across the line from time to time and stole their cattle. Pat Garrett, who had given up buffalo hunting to become a law officer in New Mexico, was obviously serious about getting rid of Billy, and the Texas cattlemen wanted to make sure he had all the support he needed from their side of the line. Poe set up headquarters in White Oaks and

In addition to being a peace officer, John William Poe almost certainly was a member of the vigilance committee. In fact, he was listed with the state adjutant general's office in Austin as being one of the "principal men in the Shakelford [sic] Co. Mob," although the Texas Rangers never had enough evidence to prove it.



Glenn Shirley Photo

Three successful sheriffs of Lincoln County: (left to right) Pat Garrett, Jim Brent, and John William Poe. When Garrett decided against a new term, he supported Poe's election. Poe, who resigned during his second term, recommended Brent as his successor.

was told to draw whatever funds he needed from the association.

Billy the Kid was already in jail for murder in Mesilla, New Mexico, when Garrett and Poe apparently met for the first time in White Oaks, in March 1881. Outlaws were still taking Texas cattle, though, and to give himself some authority in New Mexico, Poe asked Garrett to commission him as a special deputy. Since the Texas cattlemen were paying the bills, Garrett saw no problem with that.

The Kid was transferred to Lincoln jail to await execution but escaped on April 28 and went on a killing rampage. After a couple months, Garrett, who had many informants, quietly received word that Billy was hiding in Fort Sumner. He sent for Poe, explaining that he "was a stranger in the county and there was little danger that he would meet any one who knew him at Sumner." Together with Poe and Deputy Thomas McKinney, he put out the word that they were going on a business trip to Arizona and rode to Roswell. From there, however, they turned up the Pecos River toward Fort Sumner, riding by night on unfrequented trails. They finally camped at Taiban Arroyo, five miles south of Sumner. The morning of July 14, Garrett sent Poe into town to see what he could learn.

"Poe's appearance at Sumner had excited no particular observation, and he had gleaned no news there," Garrett wrote. On the one hand the sheriff's informants thought Billy was in the vicinity; on the other, they did not believe the Kid would be foolish enough to risk it, since he was well-known.

It was already late, but Garrett decided to talk to Pete Maxwell, whom he considered reliable. They rode toward Maxwell's ranch, at the abandoned military post of Fort Sumner. Just short of the ranch, they came across a man in camp, whom the startled Poe recognized as John Jacobs, his companion from Fort Griffin. The group unsaddled, had some coffee with Jacobs, then made their way on foot through an orchard toward the military buildings on the old parade ground. They heard talking in Spanish, but it was too far away to understand. Then a man got up from the ground and started toward Maxwell's house. Although Garrett did not recognize him in the darkness, it was Billy the Kid. To avoid the group on the parade ground, the lawmen eased back into the orchard, then circled around to Maxwell's. When they reached the building, Garrett left Poe and McKinney at the end of the porch, then slipped up the twenty feet to the door of Maxwell's bedroom and went in.

BILLY HAD *NOT* gone to Maxwell's but to one of the other houses a few steps away. Then he got hungry and decided to cut some meat from a side of beef hanging on Maxwell's porch. Poe noticed him but admitted later that he did not pay particular attention, thinking it was "some friend of Maxwell's—or maybe Maxwell himself." He started to stand up, but his spur caught in a crack in the porch and he stumbled.

"Quién es?" Billy demanded. "Who is it?"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," Poe replied, still unaware of the stranger's identity. "We're not going to hurt you."

The man backed toward Maxwell's door, gun in one hand, knife in the other. Poe did not want him walking in, unannounced, on Garrett, but there was nothing he could do. Billy continued to back into the room, and they heard him call in English, "Pete, who are those two fellows out there on the porch?"

A shot rang out and then another. Poe jumped in front of the door, his pistol drawn, but could see nothing. From inside, he heard a gasping sound, "like someone dying." Suddenly Garrett ran out, gun in hand, yelling, "I killed the Kid! I killed the Kid!"

Then Maxwell dashed out and the

others turned on him with their guns. "Don't shoot!" Garrett shouted. "That's Maxwell."

Neither Poe nor McKinney had ever seen Billy, and Poe remarked, "Pat, you must have killed the wrong man. The Kid would never come here. Not to Maxwell's."

"No, I killed the Kid. I know his voice too well to be mistaken."

Maxwell found a candle and held it to the window, while the others went in and looked at the body. "Well, that's the Kid," Garrett confirmed. "He won't bother this section any longer."

POE REMAINED in New Mexico, and when Pat Garrett declined to run again for sheriff of Lincoln County in 1882, his name was put up for the post. Among his supporters was Captain J.C. Lea, a rancher in Roswell. In May 1882, Lea's household included twenty-year-old Sophie Alberding, an old family friend. One night, Lea called her into the back room of the home, where she saw Pat Garrett.

"Sophie," Lea said, "I've just had a letter from John W. Poe, our next sheriff. He's coming to Roswell for a visit, and he'll stay here with us." As he gave her some background information, she noticed Garrett watching her out of the corner of his eye. "Now, Sophie," Lea was saying, "I'm very anxious to have you like John Poe."

"Well, I usually do like people, don't I?" she replied.

"Yes, of course you do. But this is—well, it's something rather particular. I don't want you to like John Poe just as you like everyone else. In fact—well, the truth of the matter is that Pat and I have talked all this over and—."

Sophie exploded. Lea and Garret obviously were trying to match her with a man she had heard of but had never met. They tried to calm her, telling her about Poe's good qualities and his potential. They went over the other marital prospects in the area, such as one man with consumption and another who drank too much. Furious, she stormed upstairs and went to bed.

Sophie had no objections to meeting Poe and, in fact, wanted to meet him. She was determined, however, to decide her own future without help from Lea or Pat Garrett. She was favorably impressed when Poe finally arrived. He and Lea discussed the cattle business, then Lea suggested cards. Poe declined, saying he did not know how to play.

"Ten years in the West, and you don't play cards," Lea observed.

"I've seen so many killings come out of card games that I never wanted to learn to play," Poe replied. "But if the young lady is willing to teach me, I'm ready to learn now."

Author's Collection

John William Poe shortly before his death in 1923.

Neither Poe nor McKinney had ever seen Billy, and Poe remarked, "Pat, you must have killed the wrong man. The Kid would never come here. Not to Maxwell's."

"No, I killed the Kid. I know his voice too well to be mistaken."

Poe and Sophie became attached to each other. He portrayed himself to her as a basically innocent, hardworking man, almost a knight errant, who had had little time in his life for the company of women, and she swallowed the story wholeheartedly. Fortunately for her, Poe did not have many faults and, except for his stint as a vigilante back in Texas, was basically a decent man. Although she outlived him by several decades, she remained infatuated with him for the rest of her life.

After Poe left Roswell, he and Sophie corresponded. He was elected sheriff and spent most of his time in Lincoln or in the field. Finally, he wrote that he was coming to Roswell on important business, which, as it turned out, was a marriage proposal. She accepted. They were married in 1883 and moved to Lincoln. A year later they bought a ranch outside of Fort Stanton.

During his second term as sheriff, Poe heard of ranching opportunities in Argentina and, deciding to investigate, resigned. First, he took Sophie on a long-delayed wedding trip to Hot Springs, Arkansas, stopping on the way home to visit his parents, who then lived in Missouri. Then, in January 1887, he and friend Smith Lea left for Argentina and Paraguay. They toured the Argentine Pampas and found ideal ranch land, although Poe decided against a purchase at that time.

Paraguay in 1887 was still recovering from the disastrous War of the Triple Alliance, in which it had fought the combined forces of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. Much of the male population capable of bearing arms had been exterminated, and Poe and Lea wrote home that the ratio of women to men was thirteen to one. Again, the land was rich and suitable for extensive crop raising. Poe was enthusiastic about South America when he returned home in midsummer but, after some thought, decided he would do better staying in New Mexico.

Over the ensuing years, Poe planted alfalfa and helped introduce modern stock raising in New Mexico. Then, after nine years, he announced to Sophie that he had sold the ranch.

"Well, then, what are you going to do next?" she asked.

"I think I'll try banking."

Poe helped organize the Bank of Roswell and served as president from 1893 until his retirement in 1899. A year later, however, he organized the Citizen's Bank of Roswell and served as president until his death. He was on the New Mexico territorial board of equalization, and after statehood was president of the state tax commission. He served as fuel administrator for New Mexico during World War I. Although his bank suffered some financial reversals shortly before his death, he had come a long way from his days as a down-and-out buffalo hunter and frontier vigilante.

John William Poe died in July 1923. At his burial, a brother Mason said, "John Poe was one who never failed us."

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RATH CITY
Texas Hide Town

By JERRY ECKHART

Little remains now, just a few shattered whiskey bottles and two lonely graves. But between 1876 and 1879, Rath City, Texas, was the most important supply camp for buffalo hunters in Texas, and perhaps the entire Plains. The place was an oasis at the end of the Rath Trail, and there hunters wrote the final chapter in the buffalo's destruction.

The camp was a gamy, unwashed place, reeking with the stench of drying buffalo hides. Flies were more numerous than buffalo, but no one minded for the squalor signified money. A bull hide was worth about two dollars; cow hides sold for a little less. At Rath's store, hunters could use hides like cash.

By 1873, few buffalo remained on the Kansas prairies. Increased hunting had driven them south into the still-untamed Texas panhandle. The hide hunters followed and kept up their slaughter.

Enterprising freighters delivered supplies and carried hides back to shipping points in Kansas. That change in techniques enabled buffalo hunters to spend more time on the killing fields and less traveling to and from supply points.

The initial venture into the Texas panhandle lasted only six months, cut short by an Indian outbreak in 1874 that culminated in an attack on the supply camp at Adobe Walls. There a handful of determined buffalo hunters defeated a combined force of about 200 Plains Indians.

The hide hunters won the battle, but lost in other respects. Fear of continued attacks drove them back to safer regions. The Indians also lost as the Adobe Walls attack triggered a United States Army campaign that forced the tribes onto reservations. By late 1876 West Texas was clear of free-roving tribes and the hunters returned.

The two-year respite allowed the scattered buffalo to work farther south, into what are now Stonewall, Fisher, Scurry, and Jones counties in Texas. Free from hunters, the herds grew. Their peace was short-lived though, for, like wolves on a trail, the hide men sought them out.

As the hunters resumed their slaughter, merchants followed, setting up supply camps at centrally located spots in the hunting grounds. The largest and best equipped was Rath City on Mesquite Flat in southern Stonewall County. Charles Rath, a Dodge City merchant and a principal supplier in Kansas and at Adobe Walls, brought in fifty wagons loaded with gunpowder, lead, food, whiskey, and lumber for a store, saloon, and brothel.

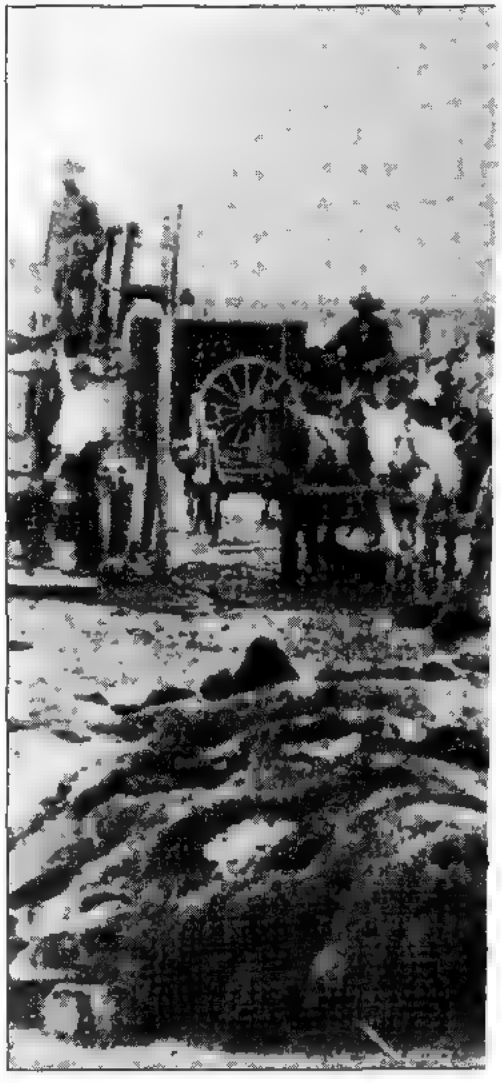
Rath's store and trading post was the first building constructed. Workmen—some brought specifically from Dodge City; others, buffalo hunters turned stonemasons—cut limestone blocks from a nearby ravine for the foundation. Then they built walls of adobe and roofed the structure with sod covered cedar poles. Cut lumber formed doors and windows. Other merchants put up buildings equally fast; almost overnight, the camp became a town.

Rath's store included a hideyard and adjoining sod corral with a guardhouse at one corner. The trail from Kansas, now known as the Rath Trail, ended in a huge circle around the hideyards and store. North of Rath's store was the sod shanty of James Knight, a Rath employee, and north of that was Charlie Sing's laundry. Across the street to the west was a blacksmith shop, George Aiken's saloon, Fleming's saloon, and a dance hall and brothel. A number of other shanties were scattered north along the trail.

Smokey Thompson, a buffalo hunter turned businessman, dug a cistern in front of Aiken's saloon, hauled water from a spring north of town, then sold it by the bucketful. As he had an ample supply of good water, Thompson began making beer. His brew was excellent and much preferred over what the saloons served.

The camp, now named Rath City, was a gamy, unwashed place, reeking with the stench of drying buffalo hides. Flies were more numerous than buffalo, but no one minded for the squalor signified money. A bull hide was worth about two dollars; cow hides sold for a little less. At Rath's store, hunters could use hides like cash. They bought powder, lead, and food, paying for them with the drying skins of a dying breed. In the few years Rath City existed, 1.1 million buffalo hides were shipped from its hideyards.

Rath's business flourished, and he often ordered staple items like flour by the hundred-barrel lot and powder and shot by the thousands of pounds. Seldom were fewer than 200 hide men



Charles Rath seated atop a rick of 40,000

in the area at any one time, and to get them to deal exclusively with him, Rath kept his prices as near those in Kansas as possible. In so doing the merchant almost monopolized the hide business. Although the hunters ranged as far as one hundred miles in any direction, they always returned to the one spot where they were certain of fair prices.

Rath spent a lot of time traveling between Fort Griffin and Mobeetie in Texas and Dodge City where he had other business interests, yet he instructed his Rath City manager, A.H. (Harvey) West, to treat the hunters fairly. West often extended credit to buffalo hunters just arrived on the killing fields until they could bring their skins for trade. West also provided new outfits to those hide men who lost their supplies through Indian raids. At no time during the life of Rath's store did those plainsmen fail to pay their debts.

But West also had to be sharp. The buffalo hunters were not above trying to slip a poorly skinned hide into their bundles. To cover up hides with nicks and cuts, hunters sometimes turned the flesh to the inside so the hair would obscure the holes.

Buffalo hunters not only had to worry about holes in buffalo skins, they had to worry about holes in their own skin—from Indians. Although most of the Plains Indians were on reservations in Indian Territory, many slipped away and attacked the hated buffalo hunters.

BECAUSE Rath City was the center for buffalo hunters, Indians attacked it several times. The attacks were usually swift, horse-stealing raids, with Indians striking at the outskirts of town, taking a few horses, then racing away.

You might say that Tom Lumpkins, the first person killed at Rath City, was the victim of such an attack. Lumpkins was a quarrelsome man who had little interest in Indian fights. He believed that if the hide men left the Indians alone, the warriors would leave the hunters alone.

In early April 1877, Comanches raided the area, coming within five miles of Rath City. They killed three hunters, looted several camps, and stole a number of horses and oxen. Hide men gathered to chase the raiders and asked Lumpkins to join them. He refused, saying that he had lost no Indians and didn't plan to go looking for any. The hunters left Lumpkins behind and caught up with the raiding party. They killed several Indians and recovered most of the horses and stock.

Two days later a number of the hide men were in Fleming's saloon where one was getting his hair cut. Lumpkins stood at the bar, drinking heavily and staring at the men gathered in the corner which served as a barbershop. He made several derogatory remarks about those who had gone after the Comanches; then the man getting his haircut came to the group's defense. Lumpkins

Boot Hill Museum, Dodge City, Kansas

buffalo hides in the Rath and Wright hideyard at Dodge City

said nothing, but drew his pistol and shot, breaking the man's arm near the shoulder.

Buffalo hunter John Cook witnessed the shooting and later described it. "At the time Lumpkins shot him, he [the man] was sitting upon a chair, and my partner, Crawford, was cutting his hair. This all happened in the saloon. Crawford stepped in front of Lumpkins and said, 'What do you mean, Tom?'

"'Get out of the way, Crawford; he has insulted me.'

"Just then, Jim Smith (another hunter) pulled out his revolver, ran up, jerked Crawford to one side and fired. Tom then backed toward the door, shooting as he went, Smith following him up."

Lumpkins staggered toward a wagon parked in front of Aiken's saloon. Smith followed and emptied his pistol into Lumpkins, who fell forward, sprawled out, about ten feet from the wagon.

Cook said Smith and Lumpkins had argued frequently about the Indian question and had come close to gunplay several times. Witnesses generally agreed that Smith was justified in killing Lumpkins.

Rath Citians buried Tom Lumpkins about 300 yards up the trail from the town. Following the burial, several witnesses accompanied Jim Smith to Fort Griffin where he surrendered to authorities. Shackelford County records indicate Smith won acquittal by reason of "justifiable homicide."

The second grave in that two-plot cemetery belonged to a former army scout, Spotted Jack. He rode out early the morning of June 14, 1877, bound for the spring about a mile north of town. Jack had not gone far when a band of Comanches came out of a ravine and headed straight for him. He wheeled his horse and raced toward the safety of Rath City. A Comanche arrow struck him in the back, but Jack spurred his horse and hung on. In spite of his wound, the scout made it back to town and raised the alarm. His warning roused the sleeping hunters in time to drive back the Indians and save the town. Jack died later that day and was buried beside Tom Lumpkins.

Cartridges found at Rath City

Boot Hill Museum, Dodge City, Kansas

Charles Rath about 1878.

Occasional Indian attacks continued until early 1878. By then the army had arrested and confined many of the Indian leaders, effectively breaking up the large raiding parties. Small bands of three or four sometimes slipped away for short raids, but for the most part the Indian problem was over in Texas.

With Indians out of the way, the hide hunters could finish off the remaining buffalo herds, and they did so with deadly efficiency. Rotting, flyblown carcasses, stripped of the hide, hump, and tongue, surrounded Rath City for miles.

Buffalo hides poured into Rath's hideyard until there seemed no end to the prosperity. The dancehall rocked to the stomp of the hunters, the saloons ran until dawn, and wagon after wagon rolled north to Dodge City.

Originally mail ran only between Fort Griffin and Rath City, but the route was extended to include Mobeetie. Painted women came from Fort Griffin

Both, Author's Photos

A sandstone marker indicates the Marcy Trail, which ran near Rath City.

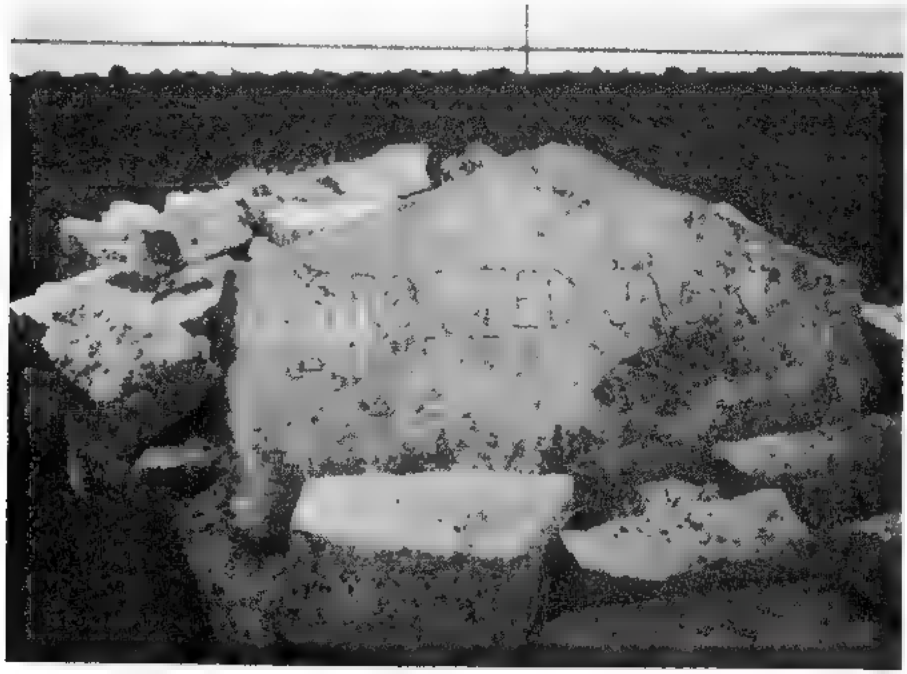
for dances and parties, while many Griffinites traveled to Rath City just to see the excitement.

Prosperity was temporary, though. On January 25, 1878, the Fort Griffin *Echo* reported, "two hunters came in from Hamburg's store on Teepee Creek, bringing a few buffalo hides and 2,000 pounds of meat." That was a tiny amount compared to a few months before. By May 1878, hunters counted their kills in twos and threes rather than hundreds. Some hide men returned east, while others, such as J. Wright Mooar, remained in West Texas to write new pages in history.

Charles Rath paid a final visit to his town, and decided to close the store. Harvey West stayed behind to pack the remaining goods while Rath returned to Fort Griffin, where he and Frank Conrad were partners in a general merchandise concern. Former saloon man George Aiken freighted everything to Camp Supply, Indian Territory, where Rath had government contracts. Soon, only West and Sing, the laundryman, remained. When they departed Rath City was left to the rain, dust, and wind.

The same wind that blew through the skeleton of the hide town blew change into all of West Texas. The Indians were gone, stripped of their freedom and dignity, just as the buffalo were stripped of their hides. Charles Rath went on to other things, but the mighty fortune he earned by supplying buffalo hunters soon dwindled, and he died in poverty.

Where the thunder of Sharps and Henry rifles once echoed, the quiet is now broken only by the lowing of cattle and the rustle of grain, stirred by the ever-present West Texas wind. That same wind skitters across the plowed field that was once Rath City, stirs dust devils into fanciful figures, and plays tag with ghosts from the past. Between the rows of grain, an occasional broken bottle or corroded cartridge pokes up from the earth. Those insignificant objects are all that remain to remind us of the men who followed the herd and blazed the trail to the buffalo's destruction.



Author's Photo

Spotted Jack's grave.

Fine Place To Visit? You Betchum!

By SHARON E. MARTIN

Two miles west of Pagosa Springs, Colorado, on US 160, a sign beside the highway announces the Fred Harman Art Museum. If you are unfamiliar with the name Fred Harman, you are more likely to know of his creations, Red Ryder and Little Beaver. If Dame Fortune never sent that justice-serving duo your way, Red Ryder was a flame-haired cowboy bent on helping the unfortunate.

"You go catchum thief now?" his sidekick, Little Beaver, would ask, and Red Ryder would be on his way.

In *Adventure at Chimney Rock*, Red Ryder chases after the "stickup" who has absconded with the money the Duchess needs to save her ranch. "I ought to know by now there's folks in this world you can't trust," Red Ryder growls to his horse, Thunder. "Even if most people are honest an' decent."

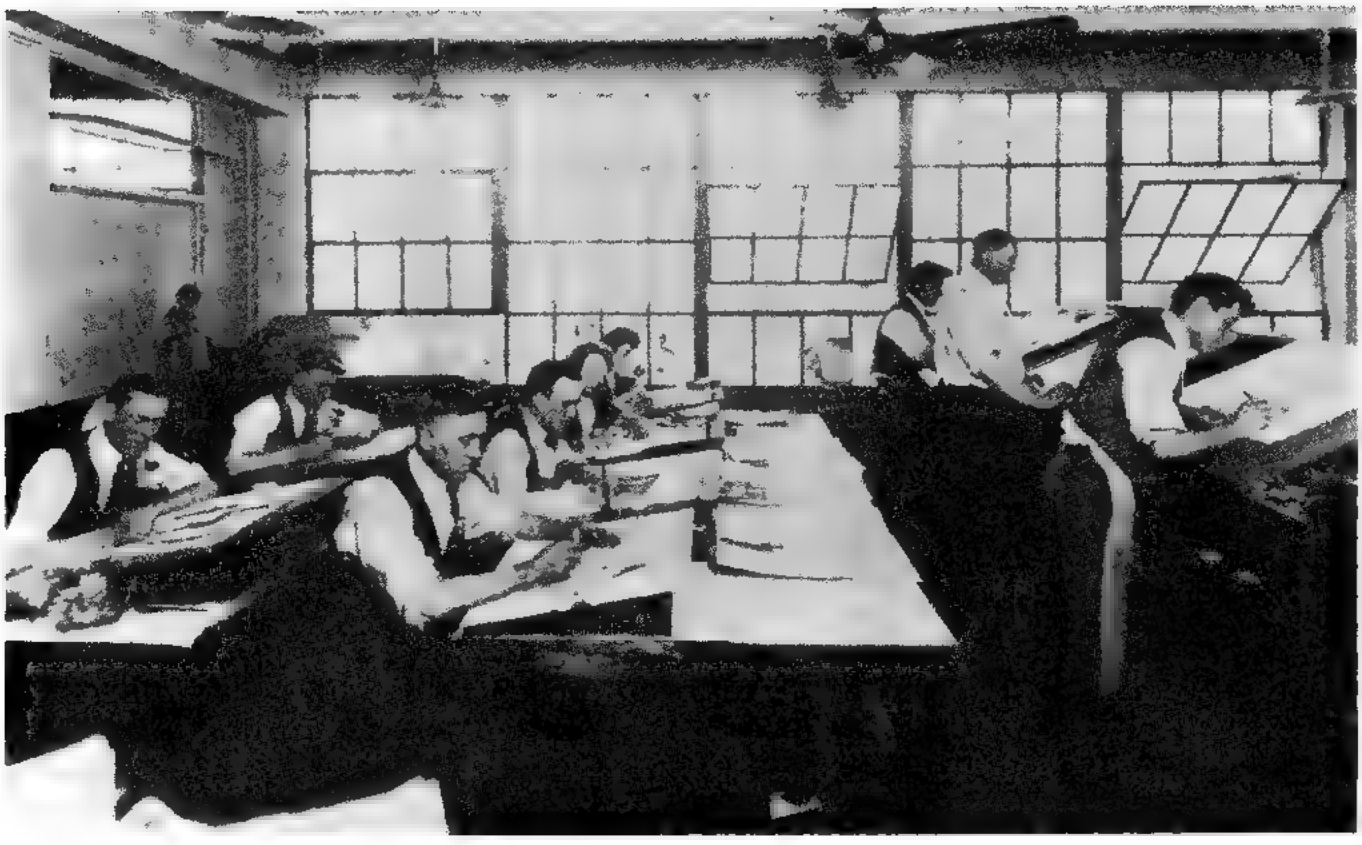
As he mounts his breathless pursuit, there is never any doubt that justice will be served, for those dastardly villains—One Eye, Gringo Bill, Ace Hanlon (who is also the villain of Red Ryder's first comic-book adventure)—are no match for the gallant cowboy.

When events turn on Ryder, and they frequently do, Little Beaver is there to turn them back aright.

The story of Red Ryder unfolds in the rooms of the Fred Harman Art Museum, but Ryder does not live alone there. Like Harman's life, the museum

Fred Harman Art Museum, Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Fred Harman worked as a hand at the Pagosa Lumber Company Ranch at the foot of Wolf Creek Pass. Picture taken circa 1916–18.



Fred Harman Art Museum, Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Fred Harman (left) and Walt Disney (second from left) at Kansas City Film Ad, 1922.

includes art and fiction, but also includes western history. Fred Harman III, son of the artist, leads visitors back to a time when Utes and Navajos fought over the therapeutic waters of Pagosa Springs and when a move from Kansas City to a ranch in Colorado changed the course of a family's history for generations.

In 1889, Fred Harman, Sr., and his brother staked adjoining claims near Pagosa Springs. On the hunting grounds of Utes and Apaches below rugged Wolf Creek Pass, the transplanted Missouri attorney raised cattle and a family.

Harman's son, Fred, Jr., might have been just another colorful Colorado rancher. But in those restless years after World War I, with more than ten years of cowpunching under his buckle, the younger Harman took a job with the Film Ad Company in Kansas City. He and a fellow Film Ad employee, Walt Disney, collaborated on a commercial film venture. Some accounts say the venture failed, but it led Disney and Harman onto the life paths each would follow.

Disney went to California. Harman returned to Colorado to ranch and raise a family . . . and to draw.

In 1934 Harman created Bronc Peeler, a cartoon cowboy. Unable to interest a syndicate in the strip, Harman loaded his drawings in his car and went on the road to peddle the strip himself.

Perhaps it was the authenticity the rancher was able to give his characters that made Red Ryder and Little Beaver so beloved. Little Beaver combines traits of the Apache and the Navajo, and young Native Americans of both tribes played him in parades and rodeos. Harman himself was adopted by the Navajo tribe.

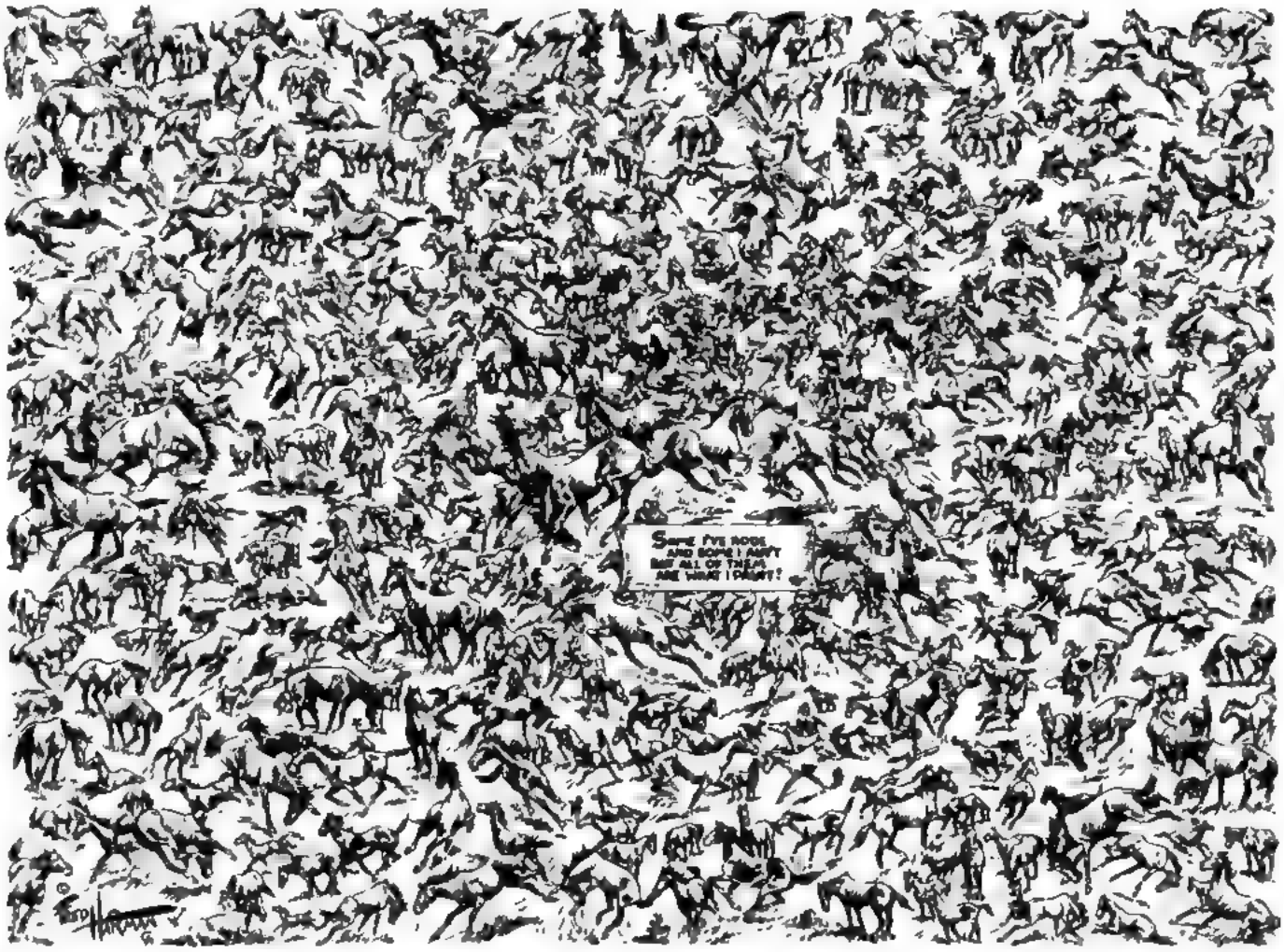
Bronc Peeler appeared in newspapers across the country, acquiring a sidekick along the way. It was the little Indian that captured the attention of a syndicate executive. In life as in fiction, Little Beaver saved the day. Harman renamed his hero Red Ryder, and the Newspaper Enterprise Association syndicated the strip. The adventures of the fire-haired cowboy and his Indian friend premiered November 6, 1938.

For more than twenty-five years Red Ryder rode to make the West safe in more than 750 newspapers and in the three-and-one-half-inch tall Big Little Books of the early forties, in standard-sized books, and beginning in 1948, in comic books that sold by the millions. With money earned from the Red Ryder strip, Harman bought a ranch in the Blanco Basin, a few miles from the Harman homestead. He called it the Red Ryder Ranch. Despite the name, it was no cartoon prop but a working ranch.

Perhaps it was the authenticity the rancher was able to give his characters that made Red Ryder and Little Beaver so beloved. Little Beaver combines traits of the Apache and the Navajo, and young Native Americans of both tribes played him in parades and rodeos at different times. Harman himself was one of seventy-six whites adopted by the Navajo tribe, and he was privy to many of their beliefs and ceremonies.

"Little Beaver was based on no one in particular," Fred Harman III admits. "But Red Ryder was based on a cowboy I grew up with named Bill Flaugh. His father, Fred Flaugh, was a stagecoach driver."

Following the success of his cartoon strip, and with his usual aplomb, Har-



Fred Harman Art Museum, Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Fred Harman "sharpened his brush" by drawing one or two horses every morning.

"I wasn't born an artist," he is reported to have said. "I was born with a husky pair of lungs and a liking for hair and rawhide." Like his predecessor, Remington, Harman knew the horse. Unlike Remington, who spent most of his life in the East, Harman spent years in the saddle, riding herd on cattle and working rodeos.

man flew to Michigan to present Daisy Air Rifle with the idea for a BB pistol modeled after his single-action Colt .45. Daisy was not interested in the pistol. What they wanted was an air rifle resembling Harman's old .30-30 carbine saddle gun—the Red Ryder Air Rifle.

Red Ryder books and magazines and a special limited edition Red Ryder BB gun (one of one) are examples of what you will find in the museum. But the museum's scope extends in either direction from this phase of Harman's history.

The homestead cabin where Harman grew up sits on a plot deeded to the museum by the Harman family. It is being restored along with a log cabin (circa 1890) from the Hell's Hip Pocket area, the Ruby Sisson schoolhouse from Blanco Basin, and a building from old Fort Lewis, to become an integral part of the museum.

After he retired from newspaper deadlines, Harman returned to his first love—painting realistically a cowboy's life and times. Harman was an original member of Cowboy Artists of America and thought of himself as a "cowboy artist." He produced more than 500 oil paintings, one of which appeared on the cover of the October 1968 TRUE WEST.

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Like his predecessor, Remington, Harman knew the horse. Unlike Remington, who spent most of his life in the East, Harman spent years in the saddle, riding herd on cattle and working rodeos.

When a fellow Cowboy Artist asked Harman how many ways he could draw a horse, Harman decided to find out. On a piece of drawing paper set up in his studio, he began to draw a horse or two every morning "to sharpen his brush," he said. In less than a year he had filled the twenty-seven by thirty-eight inch paper with 427 horses, no two alike. Many of the horses wore Harman family brands, and a verse in the center begins, "Some I've rode and some I ain't. . . ." You'll find the original in the museum. Prints are available for purchase.

In addition to the Red Ryder air rifles, the museum houses Harman's guns, including a Sharps cavalry rifle. Also on display is Harman's rodeo saddle with its 148 pieces of Navajo silver.

Museum hours run from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. seven days a week from Memorial Day through Labor Day; Monday through Friday in winter. Admission is a token one dollar.

About two miles from the museum (and about 200 yards from Pagosa Springs' only stop light) the hot mineral springs are open to the public. The springs were named a state historical site in 1991, due in part to the efforts of Fred Harman III. In addition to its purported curative powers, the water heats many of the public buildings in the springs' namesake town.

Fred Harman Art Museum, Pagosa Springs, Colorado

Fred Harman's Pagosa Springs studio is now part of the Fred Harman Art Museum.

According to Ute legend, the waters of Pagosa Springs were born when sickness swept through the tribe. When even the medicine men had failed, the Utes built a fire on the banks of the San Juan River to send a message to their gods. They danced and prayed until they slept, exhausted. The fire burned down, leaving a boiling lake. When the people awoke they bathed in and drank the water and were cured of the sickness. They called the place *Pahgosa*, meaning "healing water."

The springs were a meeting place for the Utes and for the Navajos, and the two tribes fought for the springs. The Utes won, but not before a fort had been built in the area to help control the "troublesome Indians."

Fort Lewis occupied its Pagosa Springs location for four or five years, but when things calmed down around the springs, the fort was moved west. Pagosa Springs officially became a community about the time the Harman brothers came to Colorado.

Summer activities for visitors to Pagosa Springs include the annual Red Ryder Rodeo. Just across the border from Pagosa Springs, you can catch the Cumbres and Toltec at Chama, New Mexico. The narrow-gauge train crosses the Continental Divide on its trip to Antonito, Colorado.

Temperatures drop to delicious fifties at night, so summer visitors should pack a sweater.

Skiing and dogsled racing are the main winter sports. Roads in the area are kept open year round, but during heavy snow the Colorado chain laws go into effect.

Mining for Colorado's past is a year-round sport. Western history buffs know the richness of the Colorado claim, but will they find good ore at the Fred Harman Art Museum?

In the immortal words of Little Beaver, "You betchum."

Fred Harman Art Museum, Pagosa Springs, Colorado

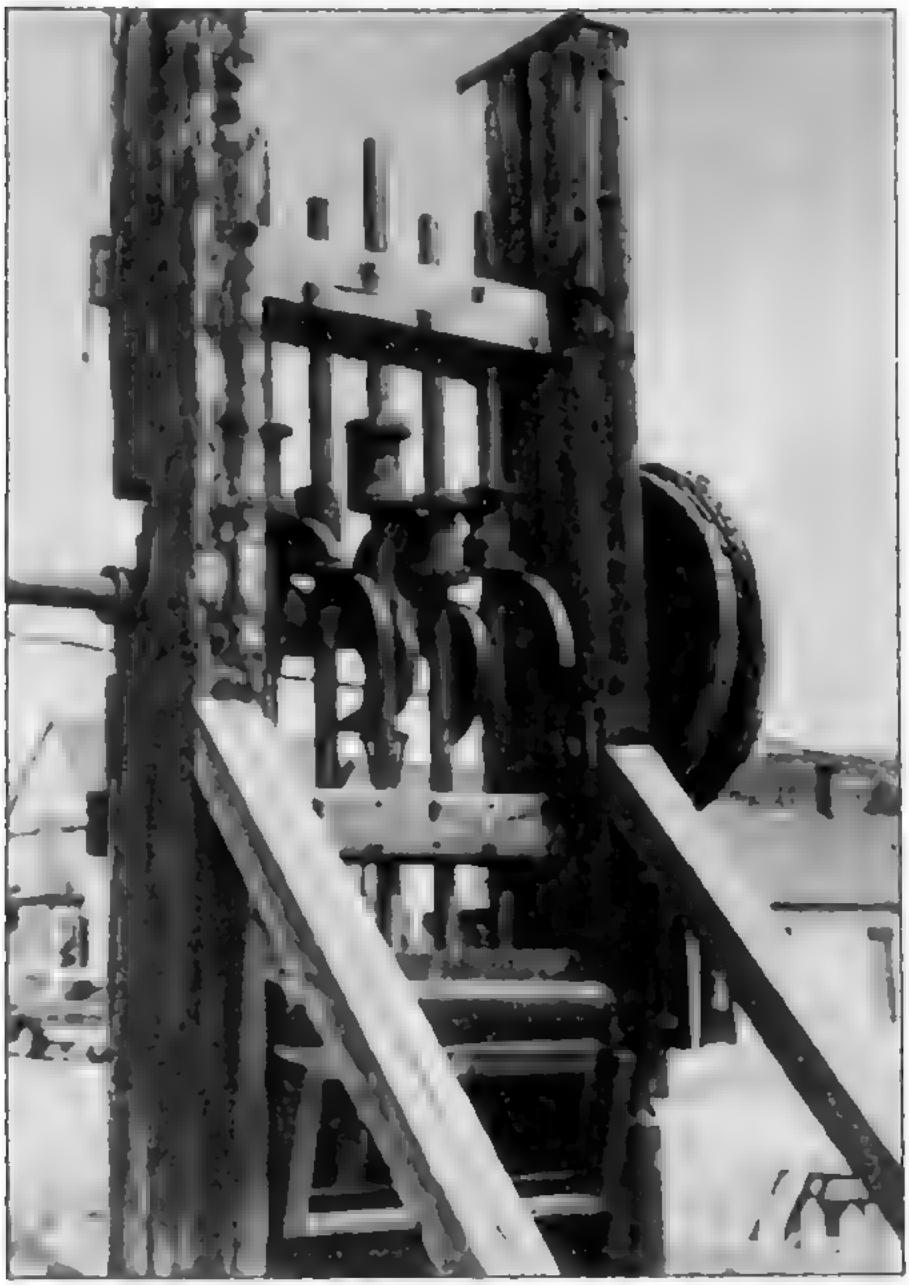
Fred Harman with his oil painting, "Contrary Longhorn."

Bonanza at Farncomb Hill

By STEVE VOYNICK

In just fifty years following the great California gold rush, the United States' cumulative gold mine production topped 110 million troy ounces. That amounted to 3,500 tons of gold which had been mined in every conceivable form. Much of it was not mineralogically noteworthy, such as the nondescript dust and flakes that came from many placers, or hardrock ores in which the gold was invisible. But it also included gleaming, fist-sized nuggets from the California placers, strikingly beautiful gold-on-quartz from the Mother Lode mines, and glittering telluride crystals from Cripple Creek, Colorado.

None of it, however, was more spectacular or more in demand as specimens than that from the tiny mines at Farncomb Hill near Breckenridge, Colorado. The only thing more remarkable than the gold itself was the fact that, for eighteen years, countless prospectors had walked right over Farncomb Hill, never suspecting that one of the world's most unusual bonanza gold deposits lay literally six feet under their boots.



Author's Photo

Stamp mills such as this crushed most of the Colorado lode gold mined in the 1800s. Farncomb Hill gold was the first to escape the mills in any quantity.

PLACER GOLD was discovered near the future site of Breckenridge, 9,500 feet high and sixty straight-line miles west of Denver, in August 1859. The strikes at Gold Run and in French, Georgia, and American gulches were phenomenally rich, sometimes yielding as much as eight dollars—nearly a half-ounce of gold—per pan.

The heyday of the placer mining boom was brief and, by 1860, Breckinridge, named for United States Vice President John Cabell Breckinridge, was a town in transition. With the bonanza discoveries already depleting, miners turned to consolidation of claims and more efficient ways to wash larger volumes of lower grade gravels. Even the spelling of Breckinridge was changing, under rather unusual circumstances. Breckinridge, a pro-slavery Kentuckian, lost a run for the presidency in the 1860 election, but managed to pick up a Senate seat. Amid the growing Civil War tensions, he quickly resigned that seat to accept an appointment as a general in the Army of the Confederacy. Northern supporters in the gold camp of Breckinridge were outraged. To avoid any appearance of southern sympathy, they changed the spelling of the town's name, replacing the first "i" with an "e," and "Breckenridge" has been the accepted spelling since.

When prospector Harry Farncomb arrived in Breckenridge late in 1860, the town seemed already to have its best days behind it. That did not bother Harry Farncomb, for he acquired some claims in French Gulch and settled into a quiet life of small-scale placer mining, always washing out just enough gold to make a decent living.

Like others, Farncomb wondered about the lode source of the French Gulch placer gold. But no vein outcrops had ever been found in the upper gulch, and most prospectors simply believed that they had been completely eroded away long ago. Farncomb, however, never gave up. He panned his way up the gulch, curious as to why the trail of placer gold stopped abruptly opposite a low hill just to the north. The hill had no visible outcrops and was even covered with crumbled shale, a sedimentary rock that was a notoriously poor indicator of gold.

Finally in 1878, Harry Farncomb decided to invest the time and effort to dig a few shallow prospect holes in the side of the hill. He took samples from a depth of only four feet, panned them, and found gold. But it was not worn bits of alluvial gold typical of the gulch placers; instead, it was in the form of twisted wires and crystallized leaves with a brilliant luster, sharp edges, and no wear at all. Farncomb did not need a geologist to tell him he had discovered the lode source of the French Gulch gold.

Farncomb named his strike the Wire Patch Placer, then began mining it secretively with a pick and shovel. For nearly a year, he quietly filled small canvas sacks with gold. When he needed cash, he sold only amalgamated gold, showing no one the distinctive crystallized shapes that would indicate a new discovery. He also acquired much of the hill, not by claiming or leasing, but by buying the land an acre or two at a time, so as to attract no attention at all.

IN 1879, Harry Farncomb walked into a Denver bank and casually deposited 300 troy ounces of crystallized gold. Word spread like wildfire and hundreds of prospectors surged up French Gulch to stake claims. All they found was the disappointing fact that Farncomb already owned everything in sight.

Their disappointment quickly turned to anger, for some felt they had somehow been "cheated" of their "right" to share in the discovery. Some Denver mining promoters actually filed suit, charging Farncomb with acquiring the land "in a devious manner," thus depriving others of "fair chance." Violence erupted, culminating in a seven-hour-long French Gulch shootout that left three men dead and several more wounded. At least one bank and several local businesses failed in the avalanche of lawsuits, and the whole affair went down in local history as the "Ten Years War."

Harry Farncomb avoided the trouble, continuing to work on the hill that already bore his name and making a second discovery—the Elephant ore body, which he developed as a small underground operation called the Wire Patch Mine. He soon amassed 7,000 troy ounces of gold worth nearly $140,000, then sold out for an even bigger fortune, retiring as one of the wealthiest men in Colorado.

But the saga of Farncomb Hill was just beginning. Five major vein systems—the Boss, Gold Flake, Bondholder, Key West, and Fountain—were found, none progressing deeper than 300 feet. Mining revealed that the vertical veins had been emplaced right through the country rock into the overlying shale, but were too thin, erratic, and fragile to form outcrops. As the shale had weathered away, the fragile veins crumbled to bits, freeing the contained crystallized gold beneath a four-foot-deep layer of shaley soil.

What the Farncomb Hill deposit lacked in size was made up for in richness. The veins were extremely erratic, sometimes "pinching out" in mere inches or just as suddenly "blossoming" into fabulous pockets of "picture rock," some containing as much as 2,000 ounces of gold each.

Virtually all the gold was crystallized into leaf, wire, or arborescent forms. Leaf gold was most common, appearing as parallel intergrowths of flattened octahedral crystals as long as six inches. The wire gold occurred as individual wires as long as two inches, and sometimes as tangled, dense masses that the miners called "bird's nest" gold. The arborescent growths formed flattened masses about three inches long that had a flexible, "spongy" feel in the hand. The combination of forms produced an

Author's Photo

Breckenridge during its days as a booming frontier gold camp.

Farncomb named his strike the Wire Patch Placer, then began mining it secretively with a pick and shovel. For nearly a year, he quietly filled small canvas sacks with gold. When he needed cash, he sold only amalgamated gold, showing no one the distinctive shapes that would indicate a new discovery.

Author's Photo

Ruins of an old gold boat in French Gulch as it appears today. This section of French Gulch is only two miles from Farncomb Hill

array of imaginative shapes, and many prize specimens were named accordingly—the "Sailboat," the "Dragon," and the "Jackrabbit."

The gold was 900 fine, or ninety percent pure, and glowed brightly with a rich, yellow luster. The combination of color and form was striking. When the crystallized gold from Farncomb Hill was first displayed competitively in Denver at the Colorado Industrial Exhibition of 1881, it won a blue ribbon, the first of many to come.

The first few years of mining at Farncomb Hill were utterly chaotic. Mine workings had no plan or pattern but simply followed the elusive, wandering gold veins. Miners never knew from one shift to the next whether they would drill and blast their way to famine or fortune. Because of that uncertainty, owners usually leased sections of their mines to smaller companies or teams of miners.

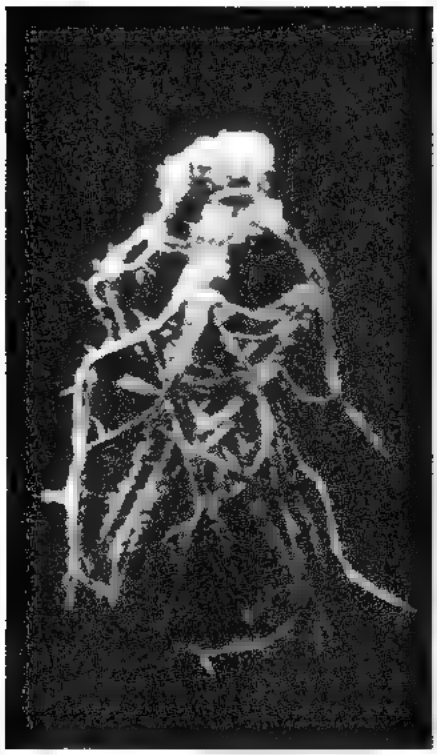
Since a single heavy gold wire could weigh one ounce and be worth eighteen dollars, more than a miner's weekly wage, high-grading, or mine theft, was rampant. Mine owners and superintendents tried everything to halt the practice, but miners had long, dark shifts to devise clever ways around any security efforts. Some mine owners rightfully suspected that as much gold was being stolen as was appearing on their official production reports.

CONSOLIDATION soon led to larger, more efficient operations. Among the first big "consolidateds" was the twelve-mine partnership of Colonel A.J. Ware and Mason Carpenter. Ware and Carpenter leased mine sections to miners who assumed all risks and costs. In return, the miners paid a flat lease fee and a royalty of twenty-five percent of all the gold they mined. The royalty was payable immediately as "free gold," that is, just as it was mined. Colonel Ware used the royalty to assemble the first important collection of Farncomb Hill gold.

Many magnificent specimens were recovered, but none matched the piece found by Tom Groves and Harry Litton, two miners working a lease on the Gold Flake vein. On July 23, 1887, luck was with them, and they blasted into a bonanza pocket. In just four hours, they recovered 243.5 troy ounces of gold worth about $4,400. It was not the richest pocket ever found at Farncomb Hill, but it became the most celebrated, for one of the specimens weighed 160 troy ounces—by far the largest single piece of gold ever mined in Colorado. Unfortunately, two fragments were broken off during extraction from the pocket, leaving the weight of the specimen at 136.5 troy ounces.

An elated Tom Groves proudly carried the specimen about the streets of Breckenridge on a black pillow, pausing often to caress it lovingly. Envious miners gave it the name that is still used today—"Tom's Baby." The big nugget (the term "nugget" was used at the time to describe big specimens of both placer and lode gold) was next displayed at Colonel Ware's Breckenridge office, then at Mason Carpenter's Denver office to help attract investment capital to the Breckenridge mines.

The headline of the Breckenridge *Daily Journal* on July 25, 1887, read "An Immense Nugget of Gold!" and was followed by the dramatic details of



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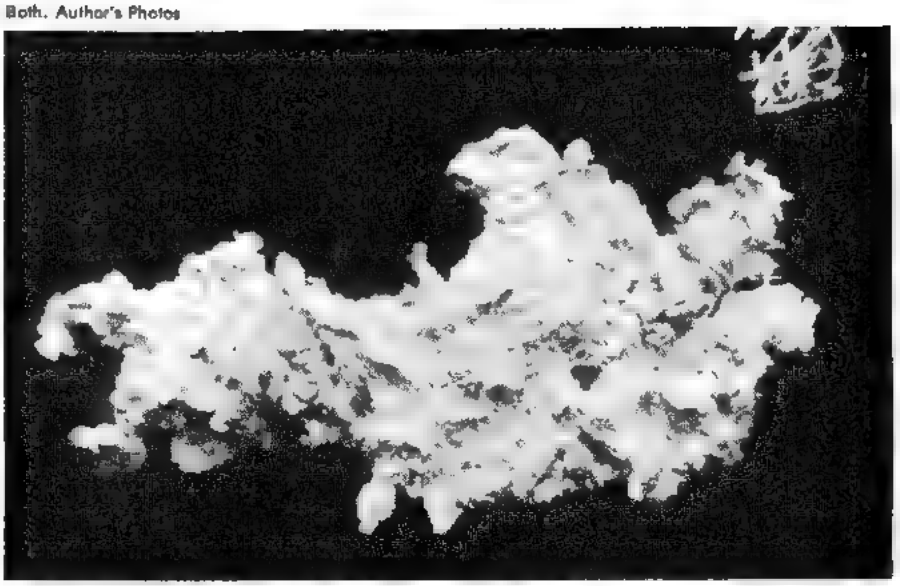


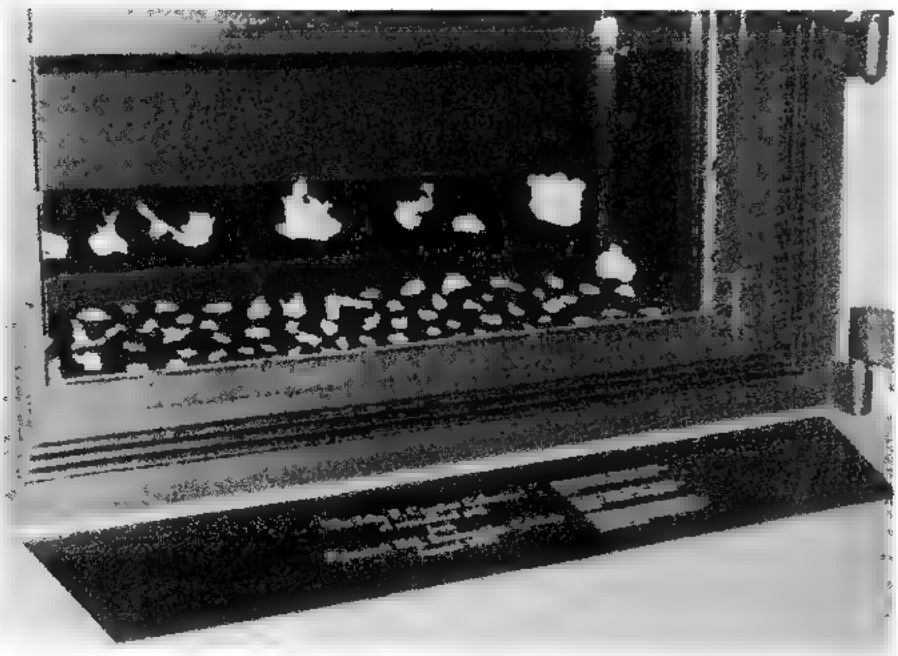
Left: Wire gold from Farncomb Hill. This specimen, from a private collection, is 1.5 inches long and weighs .7 troy ounce. Right: Crystallized gold from Farncomb Hill (private collection). The specimen is nearly 2.0 inches long and weighs .9 troy ounce.

the discovery. "Although this vicinity during the last two years has sent out thousands of fine specimens of nugget gold," the article went on, "this one dwarfs them all." The reporter then indulged in a bit of good-nature bragging: "136 oz. 5 dwts. Where is the district that can knock that chip off our shoulder in 1887?"

Farncomb Hill's crystallized gold generated the first collector interest in Colorado gold. Previously, very little gold, regardless of beauty or mineralogical rarity, escaped the stamp, amalgation, or chlorination mills. But Farncomb Hill specimens were in such demand that they enjoyed higher-than-bullion prices which, of course, exacerbated the high-grading problem. Working miners routinely stole from lessee bosses, lessees stole from lessor mine owners, and in one case, mine owner partners stole from each other. For miners, high-grading was a simple matter of concealment and theft; at the management level, it was a bit more sophisticated, involving falsification of royalty and production reports.

Just how much gold was actually mined and high-graded will never be known. But in 1911, the noted Colorado geologist and educator Arthur Lakes wrote in *The Mining World* that more Farncomb Hill gold "was probably sold as specimens and stolen by miners than was ever shipped by the owners."

The most ardent collector of Farncomb Hill gold was John F. Campion, a Canadian-born, Denver-based mine owner and manager. When Campion's Wapiti Mining Company acquired control of several Farncomb Hill mines in 1894, the wealthy owner made collecting a priority. Aware of the high-grading problem, Campion offered top dollar for all prime specimens brought to him, even by his own miners to whom he already paid wages, no questions asked. other owners criticized Campion's policy, charging that "buying gold that already belonged to him" could only encourage more high-grading. But Campion was not deterred; by 1900, his 600-piece collection ranked among the world's leading collections of crystallized gold. The centerpiece of the Campion collection was none other than "Tom's Baby."



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The John F. Campion collection of crystallized gold from Farncomb Hill as currently displayed by the Denver Museum of Natural History.

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Meanwhile, Farncomb Hill gold won fame far beyond Colorado, achieving both national and international recognition. Judged alongside the world's best, it won prestigious gold medals at Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and again at the 1903 Paris Exposition.

After the turn of the century, the Farncomb Hill mines went into sharp decline. Gold production at Breckenridge shifted back to placer mining with the introduction of the "gold boats," the big, floating, bucketline dredges that made working very low-grade gravels profitable.

In 1900, John F. Campion donated his entire private collection of Farncomb Hill crystallized gold as a founding gift to help establish the Denver Museum of Natural History. That same year, "Tom's Baby" was mentioned prominently in Thomas Jefferson Hurley's classic work, *Famous Gold Nuggets of the World*. The little mines on Farncomb Hill fell into ruin, the last closing shortly after World War I, their glory days now remembered only in the history books and the shelves of museums around the world.

THE STORY OF "Tom's Baby," however, was not quite finished. After several years on display, Colorado's biggest known specimen of native gold seemed to disappear, both materially and from the museum's inventory. Decades passed and only a few historians even recalled that "'Tom's Baby" ever existed. In 1955, reporter Pasqualle Marranzino summed up the mystery in Denver's *Rocky Mountain News*. "The cloak of Colorado history, and the dim light of time, keep hiding the fact that someone kidnapped 'Tom's Baby.'"

The mystery was not solved until 1972, when inventory of a Denver bank vault brought some Campion gold specimens to light for the first time in fifty years. Because of poor security in its early days, the museum had not displayed the entire Campion collection, locking many specimens away instead for safekeeping. The inventory revealed two large pieces of crystallized gold weighing 78 and 24 ounces. The two pieces fit together perfectly to match the photograph of the orginal "Tom's Baby" in Hurley's *Famous Gold Nuggets of the World*. Other pieces also seemed to "fit," and probably accounted for the "missing" 34 troy ounces of the original 136-ounce specimen.

The "disappearance" of "Tom's Baby" apparently began when it was broken by museum technicians attempt-

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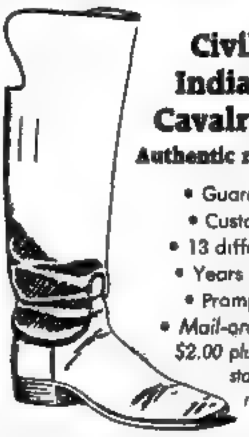

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ing to enhance its display appearance. Because of the physical alteration, and perhaps a lack of full appreciation at the time for the specimen's historical significance, the individual pieces of "Tom's Baby" were catalogued separately and consigned to the bank vault, possibly during the 1920s.

Today the enlarged exhibit space of the Denver Museum of Natural History's Coors Mineral Hall and its triple-security Gold and Silver Room allow display of nearly the entire Campion collection. The highlight of the exhibit is "Tom's Baby," a reassembled piece of brilliant, intricate crystallized gold weighing 102 troy ounces, or about seven avoirdupois pounds. It is still the largest piece of gold ever mined in Colorado.

While the Denver Museum of Natural History claims the world's premier collection of Farncomb Hill crystallized gold, many other beautiful specimens mined, high-graded, and collected during the 1880s and 1890s may be seen at a number of leading museums across the country. Farncomb Hill gold is exhibited at the Harvard Mineralogical Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts; the American Museum of Natural History, New York City; the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.; and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles.

HARRY FARNCOMB, Tom Groves, John F. Campion, and all the others who played a part in the story of the gold of Farncomb Hill would not recognize Breckenridge today. Both placer and lode mining have faded into history, and Breckenridge has made a sweeping economic and cultural transition to a life of skiing and tourism. Even the miles of gold boat tailings that once covered the channels of French Gulch and the other nearby placers are slowly being reclaimed for residential and recreational use.

Nevertheless, when mining historians and the few surviving old-timers get together with mineral collectors, museum curators, and aficionados of fine crystallized gold, the conversation eventually leads back to Farncomb Hill. For it was there, 114 years ago, on the side of that hill in upper French Gulch, that a prospector named Harry Farncomb trusted his instincts and made one of the world's most remarkable gold discoveries.

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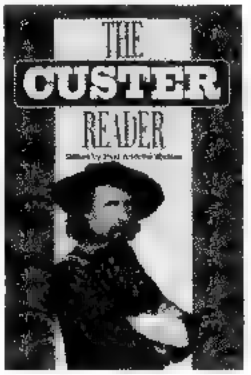

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Tales of Texas

Buffalo Guns and Barbed Wire, by Don Hampton Biggers. (Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, Texas 79409-1037. $39.95 cloth bound.)

If you look up Don Hampton Biggers in that bible of southwestern Americana, *The Handbook of Texas*, you will find a good-sized sketch of a wandering printer, editor, and newspaper publisher who also wrote a few freelance books. Famous in his day for his no-holds-barred editorializing—fulminating—against injustice, crookedness, and hypocrisy, Biggers would be forgotten today were it not for the books that he wrote on the side. They have proved of lasting interest.

Texas Tech has combined Biggers' best two books, *Pictures of the Past* and *History That Will Never Be Repeated* (both rare), in one volume with a new title. Their author was no professor like Frank Dobie, but, like Don Pancho, he had a love for the lore of the Southwest as well as its grassroots history. He also had that innate sense of history that many academics seem to lack.

Pictures of the Past, the story of buffalo hunters as told by old-timers in the trade, is better than *History That Will Never Be Repeated*, which deals with the early days of the cattle trade in west Texas. The first is more interesting and richer in anecdotes. Much of the cattle book is, of necessity, a list of ranches, owners, and dates to set the record straight.

In this new edition, George Robertson's excellent photos of the 1874 buffalo hunt enhance the buffalo accounts. The classic range photographs of Erwin E. Smith, correctly called the outstanding cowboy photographer of the West by no less an authority than J. Evetts Haley, illustrate the cattle section. A.C. Greene sets the scene with a useful introduction, and Seymour V. Connor wraps up the package by appending a biography of the author.

Biggers was born too late (1868) for buffalo hunting or trail herding himself, but he was on the scene in time to take down the firsthand recollections of participants in both activities. Here are details of the shift of hunts from Kansas to Texas, the great slaughter of 1876, and the last act, that of the bone

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pickers. In the cattle trade section, Biggers gives information on roundups and the dreadful "die-ups" of the late 1880s, the introduction of barbed wire, and the importance of windmills on the parched plains.

The better yarns cluster around the hide trade, though do not always involve buffalo hunters, per se. Included are stories of ex-Comanchero, José, who became Ranald Mackenzie's trusted guide; the disastrous Nolan-Harby Expedition, wrecked by thirst; and the successful search (after fourteen years) of an innocent man and accused murderer, J.A. Brock, for his supposed victim. All in all this chronicle of west Texas bison and beeves is an excellent addition to anyone's Southwest book collection.—*Richard Dillon, Mill Valley, California.*

Gunfighting In-Laws

Bowen and Hardin, by Chuck and Marjorie Parsons. (The Creative Publishing Company, P.O. Box 9292, College Station, Texas 77842. $21.95 cloth bound.)

Readers of TRUE WEST are familiar with Chuck Parsons and the "Answer Man" feature he has authored for the past nine years. In this regular column, four previous books, and many magazine articles, Parsons had displayed a wide knowledge of western history, but his primary interest has always been the virulent lawlessness in the southeastern counties of Texas during the 1870s, and the history of the best-known gunfighter of the time, John Wesley Hardin. Parsons has teamed with his wife, Marjorie, a native of Gonzales County, Texas, who traces her lineage back to that turbulent period and is an accomplished genealogist and historical writer herself, to produce a study of the peculiar relationship between Hardin and Brown Bowen, his brother-in-law.

Joshua Robert "Brown" Bowen was the older brother of Jane Bowen, John Wesley Hardin's wife. This slim volume (159 pages with an introduction by Bill C. James, forty-nine illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index) deals primarily with the life of Bowen and his tragic involvement in one of the murkiest segments of Hardin's controversial life.

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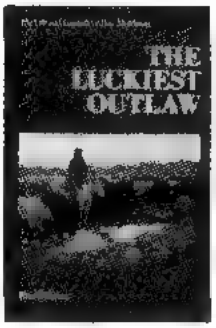

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violent locale, the killing was particularly cruel and cowardly; Haldeman was shot to death as he lay sleeping off the effects of an alcoholic binge. His killer was one of a group who had joined Haldeman in an all-day drinking debauch. Both Hardin and Bowen were among the party.

Bowen was arrested and charged with the murder, but Hardin, at the head of a dozen armed and determined men, broke him out of jail. As fugitives with prices on their heads, Hardin and Bowen fled Texas for Alabama and Florida. Hardin was traced through a letter Bowen had written and was arrested and returned to Texas in August 1877. A month later Bowen was also captured. He stood trial for the Haldeman murder, was convicted, and executed in May 1878. Bowen proclaimed his innocence to the last and repeatedly named John Wesley Hardin as the actual killer, a charge Hardin flatly denied. The authors draw no conclusions and make no judgments, but let those facts that can be unearthed now speak for themselves.

This extensively researched book is not for the casual reader; its authors assume at least a nodding acquaintance with the era of the Texas blood-feuds and Wes Hardin's role in that drama. But for those with the necessary background knowledge and interest, it fills in many gaps and answers numerous questions.—*R.K. DeArment, Sylvania, Ohio.*

Settling Arizona

With Their Own Blood: A Saga of Southwestern Pioneers, by Virginia Culin Roberts. (Texas Christian University Press, Drawer C, College Station, Texas 77843-4354. $24.95 cloth bound.)

Virginia Culin Roberts has done a great service for Arizonians, as well as all lovers of western history, in writing this book. Using the true-life story of Larcena Pennington Page Scott, the author has pulled together the strands of Arizona history from 1856 through 1913. Larcena was living in New Mexico Territory in 1856, two years after the United States made the Gadsden Purchase and six years before Arizona Territory separated from New Mexico. She continued to live in Arizona until her death, little more than a year after Arizona became the forty-eighth state in 1912.

Her father, Elias Pennington, was born in South Carolina and her mother, Julia, was born in North Carolina. They married in 1831 and four of their

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children, including Larcena, were born in Tennessee. They moved to Honey Grove, Texas, where they had eight more children before Julia died in 1855. Elias then moved his family of twelve children to the newly acquired Gadsden Purchase.

Through the years the family took care of its own needs. Elias made much of his living by freighting for the army, so the family moved from location to location, primarily to military posts. While Elias was gone with his oldest sons for weeks at a time, the older girls took care of the younger children and warded off Indians.

Larcena married in December 1859, and was abducted by Apaches the next March. When they left her for dead, she crawled and nearly starved for two weeks to get back to the camp. Indians killed her husband a year later and soon Larcena gave birth to a little girl.

The author follows the Pennington family through the years and presents the facts in an uncompromising manner. As she points out, this book "does not attempt to argue right or wrong in conflicts between Anglo-American pioneers . . . and natives of the region they settle, although those conflicts shaped the Penningtons' experiences. The point of view, however, is admittedly that of the settlers."

It could be no other way. Indians and Mexican and Anglo outlaws hounded pioneer families. Richard S. Ewell, captain at Fort Buchanan between 1857 and 1860, provided what assistance he could and settlers respected him as an Indian fighter. But he joined the Confederacy when the Civil War started; when government troops were called back East, Indians virtually took over the land. Then Confederate and Union troops began battles in the territory.

By that time most settlers were seeking safer havens. All the Penningtons except Larcena left Tucson. She stayed, married William F. Scott, and lived there until her death.

The book contains comprehensive maps, twenty-five good photographs, and a family tree in the preface. All are a great help to readers.

Roberts' research is meticulous. In fact, if she cannot verify exact instances she is very careful to let the reader know she has made an assumption. Using family letters, papers, and primary documents, she presents a large slice of bloody Arizona history without dramatics, but with profound effect.—*Willah Weddon, Stockbridge, Michigan.*

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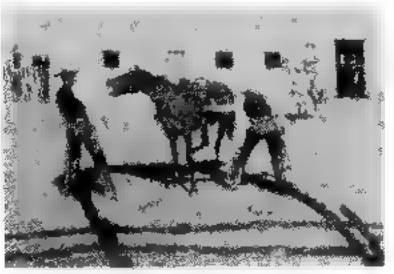

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Clay Allison vs. Charles Faber and Deputies

—December 21, 1876; Las Animas, Colorado—

By BILL O'NEAL

Clay Allison was one of the West's most vicious gunfighters. Born in 1840 in Tennessee, he ignored a club foot to serve throughout the Civil War in various Confederate units. Soon after the war ended Allison, along with two of his brothers, a sister, and her husband, left Tennessee for Texas. Along the way, at a Red River crossing near Denison, Texas, the fractious Allison severely pummeled ferryman Zachary Colbert in a fist fight.

For a few years Allison rode as a cowhand for Charles Goodnight and other ranchers before establishing his own spread near Cimarron, New Mexico. On October 7, 1870, he led a mob which broke into the jail at Elizabethtown, near Cimarron, and lynched an accused murderer named Charles Kennedy. The mob hanged Kennedy in a local slaughterhouse, and a wild-eyed Allison decapitated him and placed the head on a pole in a Cimarron saloon.

Allison had killed his first man in 1862, drilling a Union cavalryman who attempted to loot his mother's farm; Allison happened to be home on medical leave at the time. Chunk Colbert was his next known victim. Colbert had recently killed a man named Waller and was a nephew of the ferryman Allison had beaten in 1865. On January 7, 1874, Colbert and Allison staged a horse race at Tom Stockton's Clifton House, an inn and store located near Allison's ranch. After the race was judged a dead heat, the visibly disgruntled Allison and Colbert ate in the Clifton House, along with Charles Cooper, a friend of Colbert's.

After finishing his meal, Colbert reached for another cup of coffee with one hand and with the other slowly raised his revolver above the table. Allison went for his own gun and Colbert hurried his shot, blasting a slug into the tabletop. Allison killed his adversary with one bullet which entered just above the right eye. Cooper disappeared mysteriously about twelve days later, and many assumed Allison had murdered him. Eventually Allison was charged with Cooper's murder but released for lack of evidence.

On October 30, 1875, Allison became involved in another lynching, heading a mob which seized suspected murderer Cruz Vega. The terrified Vega alleged that another man was the actual culprit, but the mob hanged him from a telegraph pole anyway and then shot him in the back for good measure. Once again a bloodthirsty Allison abused the victim, tying the lynch rope to his saddlehorn and dragging the corpse over the rocks and brush. Two nights later, at Cimarron's St. James Hotel, Allison pumped three slugs into Pancho Griego, a *pistolero* friend of Vega's.

Allison began to have trouble with his neighbors, and following a scathing editorial, he wrecked the office of the *Cimarron News and Press*. While escaping from an abortive attempt to steal a herd of army mules, Allison accidentally shot himself in the right foot, aggravating his club foot and necessitating his use of a cane the rest of his life.

On Thursday, December 21, 1876, Clay Allison and his brother John engaged in a drunken revel in the Olympic Dance Hall in Las Animas, Colorado. Charles Faber, a deputy sheriff and local constable, asked the Allisons to check their guns, but they predictably ignored him. Soon people complained that the brothers were being belligerently insulting and were intentionally trampling the feet of other couples. Faber borrowed a shotgun, lined up two special deputies, and approached the Olympic.

At that point Clay was at the bar, his back to the entrance, while John still was capering on the dance floor. Faber entered the hall and someone cried, "Look out!" John whirled just as Faber fired a barrel of the shotgun, and buckshot hit him in the chest and shoulder.

Clay pulled his six-gun and fired four rounds at Faber. The first slug tore into to the constable's chest, and although the other three went wild, Faber dropped in his tracks and died almost immediately. When Faber fell, the other barrel of his shotgun discharged, striking John in the leg and slamming him to the floor.

The two special deputies fled and Clay pursued them, emptying his gun at them from the front steps of the Olym-

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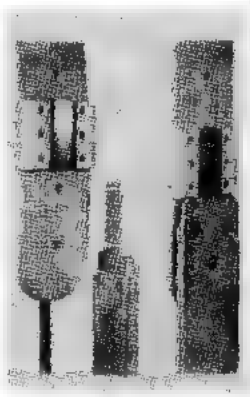

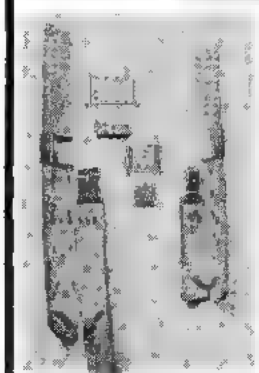

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pic. He then dragged the mortally wounded Faber over to his fallen brother, repeatedly assuring John that the lawman was dead and vengeance achieved. John was carried away and Clay surrendered to the county sheriff. Eventually John recovered from his wounds and Clay was released from custody.

Clay Allison remained contentious. In 1878 he shipped a herd of cattle east and engaged in the "East St. Louis Scrimmage," a brawl in which he trounced a man named Alexander Kessinger. He married in 1881, then sired two

Author's Photo

Clay Allison was a vicious gunfighter who was especially dangerous when drinking.

daughters—Patsy, born crippled; and Clay, born after his death. A possibly apocryphal story maintains that in 1886, after driving a herd to Rock Creek in Wyoming Territory, Allison developed a toothache and went to Cheyenne to find a dentist. The dentist began working on the wrong tooth, whereupon Allison went to another dentist for proper care. The enraged Allison then returned to the first dentist and forcibly extracted one of the unfortunate man's front teeth. He was working on another when the dentist's shrieks attracted a restraining crowd to the scene.

A year later Allison fell beneath a wagon about forty miles from Pecos, Texas, where he had gone to buy supplies. He fractured his skull on a front wheel and died within an hour.

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Aletha's Woc

By M.J. BEVER

Life on the frontier was hard, sometimes cruel. Men and women could work their whole lives and have little to show for it. Sometimes the frontier did not even allow that, as was the case with John Davis and his sixteen-year-old bride, Aletha.

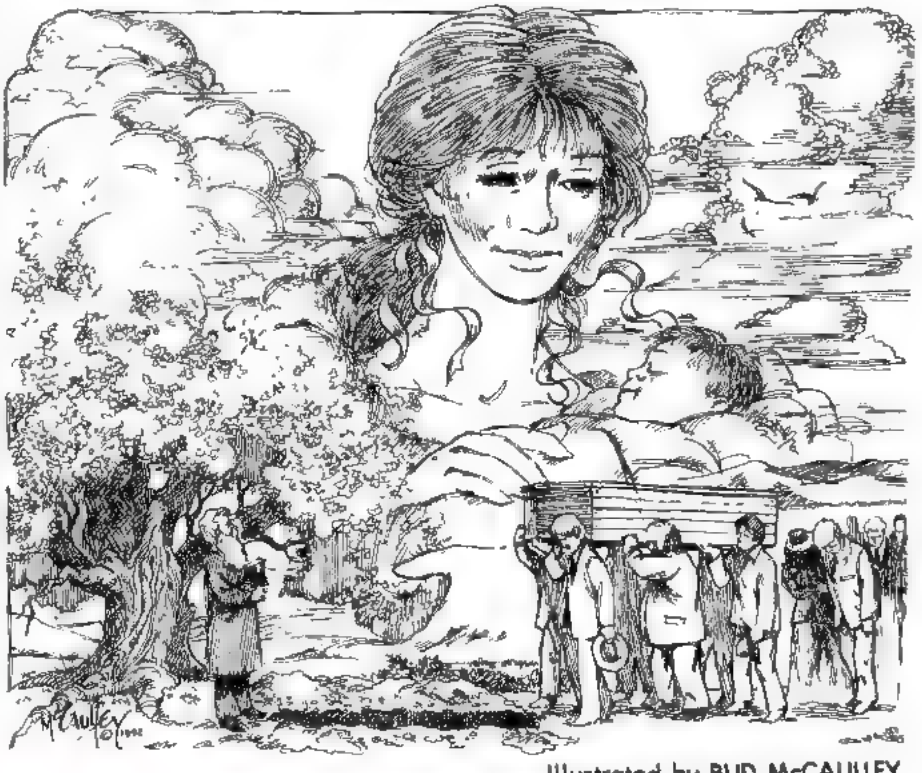
Early settlers in Palo Pinto County, Texas, the Davises arrived on the Brazos River at a valley called "Shut In," about twenty miles from Golconda, in 1857. John built their home—a double-log cabin with dirt floors—from trees that he had cut along the river.

A caring husband, John wanted the best for his wife. When Aletha became pregnant with their first child, he knew their greatest need was a wood floor for the bedroom of their cabin. He sold some cattle and some surplus corn, and the couple went to Waco to buy lumber.

John soon had the new bedroom floor laid, an event that called for a celebration. The couple danced upon the wood floor in pure joy because it was the first one in the county and was the essence of a real home on the Texas frontier.

Aletha cherished her wood floor. Throughout the summer she would have John bring her a pail of water from the spring. Then she would get down on

Aletha cherished her wood floor. Throughout the summer she would have John bring her a pail of water from the spring. Then she would get down on hands and knees and scrub her floor from wall to wall until it sparkled and her small hands were red and raw. A spot of dirt on her prized floor would have been a sacrilege.



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d Floor

hands and knees and scrub her floor from wall to wall until it sparkled and her small hands were red and raw. A spot of dirt on her prized floor would have been a sacrilege.

As the time for Aletha to give birth drew near, John rode to Golconda for the midwife, Aunt Melissa. Aunt Melissa was with him two weeks later when Aletha died during childbirth. The Davises' tiny daughter was stillborn.

The blow seemed to be too much for John to bear. He sat for hours by Aletha's bedside, holding her hand, his head bowed in grief. At last Aunt Melissa aroused him and persuaded him to ride to a neighbor's with the news of Aletha's death so that a minister could be sent for and so that Aletha's friends could pay their last respects.

While John was gone, Aunt Melissa dressed Aletha in her white wedding dress and brushed Aletha's golden hair in ringlets around her face. She then dressed the baby and placed it in Aletha's arms.

When John returned, Aunt Melissa asked him what he planned to use for a coffin. John adamantly refused to use the wood from the floor that Aletha had loved so much, until Aunt Melissa reminded him that the wood would protect Aletha's body.

Soon a neighbor arrived. With his help John removed the floorboards and built a coffin. Many friends and neighbors arrived at the Davis cabin, because Aletha was a favorite in the community, and she and John were highly respected.

When the sorrowing group had gathered under the large oak on the hillside where Aletha and the baby were to be buried, Parson Slaughter read from the fourteenth chapter of John. After Aunt Melissa sang a song, John said good-bye to his bride.

Old-timers say John Davis never got over the blow of losing Aletha and that he never rebuilt the floor in the bedroom of his cabin. Each spring after that he would cover the grave under the oak tree with wild flowers until he was later killed in the Battle of Gettysburg.

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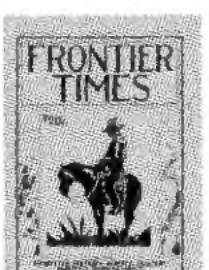

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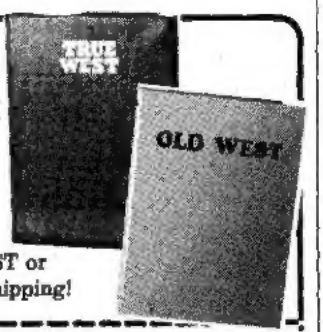

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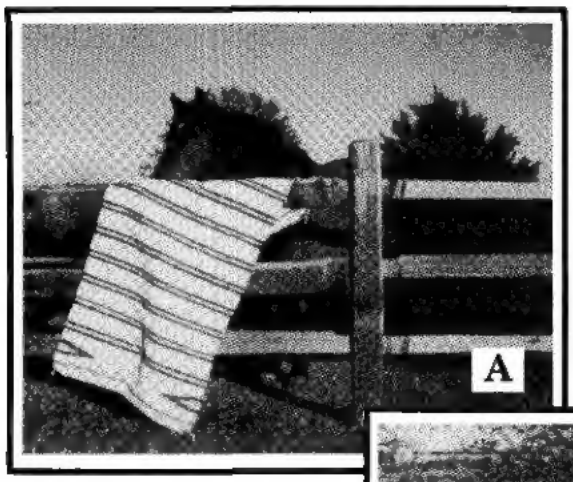

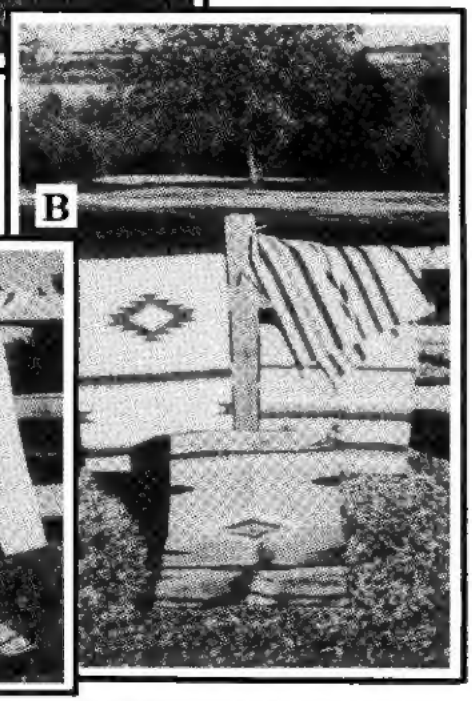

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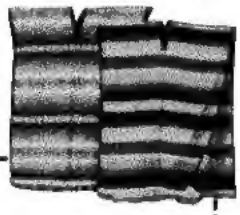

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